

# GROWING CONSTRAINTS ON LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN TODAY'S CHINA

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## HEARING BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022

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## **GROWING CONSTRAINTS ON LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN TODAY'S CHINA**

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**TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022**

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:48 a.m. via video-conference, Senator Jeff Merkley, Chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, presiding.

Also present: Co-chair James P. McGovern, Senator Jon Ossoff, and Representative Michelle Steel.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON; CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Chair MERKLEY. Good morning. Today's hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China entitled "Growing Constraints on Language and Ethnic Identity in Today's China" will come to order.

Before we turn to the subject of this hearing, I want to acknowledge that this is our first hearing since the publication of the Commission's annual report on human rights conditions and rule of law developments in China. Every year, the rigorously researched and sourced work of the Commission's nonpartisan research staff makes a profound contribution to the understanding of these issues in Congress, the executive branch, the academic and advocacy communities, and elsewhere. And that is certainly true again this year. When the Chinese government seeks to mislead the world about the treatment of Chinese citizens and the government's critics, the fact-based reporting of the CECC Annual Report shines a light and helps document the truth.

Increasingly, this work informs and catalyzes meaningful action. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is the latest example in a string of significant laws that grew out of the CECC's reporting. As Congress now works to advance China-focused legislation, it's crucial that it include tangible steps advocated by this Commission on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, such as expanded humanitarian pathways for Hong Kong residents and Uyghurs fleeing Chinese government persecution, as well as the creation of a China Censorship Monitor and Action Group to protect U.S. businesses and individuals from censorship and intimidation.

I'd like to thank the Commission's staff—incredible team—for its tireless, professional, and expert work preparing such a high-quality report. While it's truly a team effort, with significant contribu-

tions from everyone on the team, I'd like to especially recognize Megan Fluker, who played an integral role in eight of these annual reports and managed production of the last several before leaving the Commission last fall. So, Megan, I know you're on your next chapter, but we really appreciate your many years of dedicated effort.

Some of the most heartbreaking reporting details the genocide being perpetrated against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as well as elements of eugenics and population control policies directed at ethnic minorities. These are not the only ways in which the Chinese Communist Party seeks to destroy religious and ethnic minorities. Chinese authorities have engaged in a years-long campaign of sinicization, requiring greater conformity with officially sanctioned interpretations of Chinese culture.

One of the most pernicious aspects of this campaign is the targeting of ethnic minorities' language and identity. Under a policy that promises bilingual education, authorities in fact largely replace instruction in ethnic minority languages with instruction in Mandarin Chinese. Meanwhile, only a fraction of the languages spoken or signed in China today receive official recognition and support, threatening the ability and rights of unrecognized language communities to use and develop their languages. These policies break promises made to ethnic minorities under China's constitution, under the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, and under international standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In this hearing we will hear from expert witnesses about the sinicization campaign that runs afoul of these standards for protecting linguistic rights. We'll hear about the recent substantial reduction in the use of Mongolian language instruction and the harsh crackdown on Mongolian culture that followed protests over these policies. We'll hear about insidious and widespread efforts to separate Tibetan children from their parents, placing them in boarding schools to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of mother languages.

We'll also hear about the detention and imprisonment that often befalls those who stand up for language, who stand up for cultural rights, including the personal experience of one of our witnesses after he opened a Uyghur language kindergarten. This coercive assimilation erodes language, culture, and identity for ethnic minorities in China. I look forward to today's witnesses helping the Commission better understand the cost to communities of these policies as we work with Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, and others to protect their cultures from destruction.

I'd now like to recognize Congressman McGovern for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM MASSACHUSETTS; CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing on language and identity in the People's Re-

public of China. First, I want to join you in welcoming the release of the Commission's Annual Report for 2021 last week. It comprehensively documents the Chinese government's appalling human rights record. And the report took countless hours to research, write, fact-check and publish.

I particularly want to praise the Commission's professional staff of researchers for their expertise and skill in producing each annual report. They do amazing work and are a valued resource for this Commission and the entire Congress. Again, these researchers do their work objectively. They check out every single fact. The reporting is impeccably accurate, which makes this report especially powerful. Again, I can't thank them enough. Those of both parties who care about human rights ought to recognize their incredible work.

Let me quote from author James Baldwin, in a 1979 essay. He writes, "Language is a political instrument, means, and proof of power. People evolve a language in order to describe, and thus control, their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate. And, if they cannot articulate it, they are submerged." Baldwin was writing in a different context, but his message is one that anthropologists and political scientists confirm, that language is the core of a people's identity.

The People's Republic of China is a multilingual society. There are 56 official languages and hundreds more that are not formally recognized by the state. On paper, language is protected under Chinese law. China's constitution gives ethnic minorities the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs. In practice, however, we are witnessing the exact opposite. Government policies appear to promote standard Mandarin at the expense of other languages. This is happening as the Party under Xi Jinping imposes a coercive conformity across all facets of society.

This trend provides the context and the central question for this hearing. Is the Chinese government and Party deliberately eroding the language rights of ethnic minorities in a quest for majoritarian political control? And in so doing, isn't the government violating rights guaranteed under China's constitution and law? This Commission has documented protests by Tibetans, Mongolians, and others against restrictions on their own languages. These protests are often suppressed. People are jailed for simply asking that their guaranteed rights be respected.

So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the threats to the Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uyghur languages under PRC policies, and what this means for the concept of ethnic autonomy. I also look forward to hearing about the vulnerability of the hundreds of unofficial languages that also deserve protection and preservation. So again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. I will yield back.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Representative McGovern.

And I'd now like to introduce our panel of witnesses.

Dr. Gerald Roche is an anthropologist who is currently a senior research fellow at La Trobe University, a La Trobe Asia fellow, and a co-chair of the Global Coalition for Language Rights. His work

focuses on issues of power, the state, colonialism, and race in Asia. He has researched and written on issues of language, oppression, racism, ethnicity, urbanization, popular music, and community ritual in the region.

Mr. Enghebatu Togochoog is the director of the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, a New York-based human rights organization he established in 2001 dedicated to protecting the rights of Mongolian people in inner Mongolia. He is the chief editor of Southern Mongolia Watch and has testified before the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Forum on Minority Issues, the UN Committee against Torture, and the European Parliament.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong is a co-founder and director of the Tibet Action Institute. She served previously as executive director of Students for a Free Tibet and led the campaign to condemn China's rule of Tibet in the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Her real-time accounts of her travels through Beijing on her blog, one of the first in the Tibetan world, led to her detention and deportation from China.

Mr. Ayup Abduweli is a linguist, poet, and former political prisoner, a proponent of linguistic rights, and an active promoter of Uyghur language education. He opened language schools and kindergartens in Xinjiang, for which he was subjected to repeated interrogation, harassment, and eventually a 15-month detention. After fleeing China with his family in 2015, he founded Uyghur Hjelp to document the Uyghur plight and aid the Uyghur diaspora.

We'll now turn to our witnesses for their testimony. Five minutes each, if you can possibly do that, starting with Dr. Roche.

**STATEMENT OF GERALD ROCHE, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW,  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS, MEDIA AND PHILOSOPHY, LA  
TROBE UNIVERSITY**

Mr. ROCHE. Thank you very much. Greetings, everyone, from the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. Thank you sincerely for this opportunity to testify today. I deeply appreciate the chance to share with you all some insights into the language rights situation for people in China. And I thank the Commission for bringing attention to this important topic.

This topic is important because defending language rights ensures dignity, freedom, and equality for all people. And who among us would want to live without any of these? When people are denied language rights, it severs their connection to their family, community, and heritage. It excludes them from political participation. When people are denied language rights in vital services like healthcare, their lives are at risk, and when they are denied language rights in education, their futures are at risk. Millions of people in China today face these challenges due to the state's denial of language rights. This happens primarily in two ways, erasure and suppression. Erasure refers to the state's refusal to acknowledge the existence of most of China's languages by calling them dialects. To put this in perspective, imagine if German, English, and Norwegian were defined as dialects of a single language. Imagine if your government told you what language you speak. How would you feel?

In China, erasure means that from the country's 300-or-so languages, only about 56 are recognized as languages—one for each of the country's nationalities. Most people in China speak unrecognized languages, whether they belong to the Han majority or to a minority group. Most people in China are therefore completely denied their language rights. Our research demonstrates the catastrophic impact of this denial in Tibet. Tibetan people in China use about 30 unrecognized languages, not including Tibetan. People who use these unrecognized languages face linguistic barriers everywhere—in school, media, government, healthcare, the legal system and so on. When the government refuses to remove these barriers, people are forced to adapt by changing their language to either Tibetan or Chinese.

Meanwhile, recognized languages like Uyghur, Mongolian, and Tibetan are suppressed. Suppression happens through the gradual dilution of the Chinese constitution's language freedoms, and the pervasive underimplementation of protections for minority languages. Suppression also takes place through the encroachment of the national language, Mandarin, into spaces for minority languages—part of a broader plan to universalize Mandarin among the entire population. The cumulative impact of erasure and suppression means that at least half of China's languages are currently losing speakers or signers as they switch to dominant languages.

In an open, democratic society, people would be lobbying and protesting to change this unjust system. But in China, particularly under Xi Jinping, civil society has become increasingly repressed domestically and isolated internationally. China's citizens will therefore be denied an unprecedented historic opportunity to defend language rights, namely the United Nations International Decade for Indigenous Languages, which starts this year. China will prevent its citizens from participating in this event because it denies that it has indigenous people, and it denies its colonial history. The goal of this decade is leaving no one behind and no one outside. We have a responsibility to extend this inclusion to people in China, to ensure they are not left out or behind.

So here are some suggestions for how we can do this: One, the U.S. must pressure China to clarify whether its citizens are able to identify as indigenous and whether they can participate in the UN Decade. And an ideal time to do this is China's upcoming Universal Periodic Review in the UN Human Rights Council in November 2023. Secondly, China's efforts to isolate its citizens from international civil society need to be countered. We must raise awareness inside China of language rights, and of activities taking place globally during the UN Decade.

Third, with specific regard to Tibet, earmarking funding for Tibet's unrecognized languages will make a huge difference. This can be done using funds allocated under the Tibetan Policy Act. Fourth, finally, the U.S. needs to lead by example. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be formally endorsed, and its obligations respected. Failing to do so will enable China to deflect attention from their language rights violations and onto America's.

Thank you for listening and I welcome your questions.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you very much for your testimony.  
Now we'll turn to Mr. Togochoog.

**STATEMENT OF ENGHEBATU TOGOCHOG, DIRECTOR, SOUTHERN MONGOLIAN HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION CENTER**

Mr. TOGOCHOG. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Co-chair, and distinguished members of the Commission for holding this hearing. My name is Enghebatu Togochoog. I'm a Mongolian from Southern Mongolia, also known as Inner Mongolia. What's happening in Southern Mongolia today is what the Mongolians regard as wholesale cultural genocide, aimed at total eradication of Mongolian language, culture, and identity.

In 2020, responding to China's new language policy, the Mongolians carried out a massive resistance movement. Three hundred thousand Mongolian students went on a total school strike. The Chinese authorities responded with massive arrests. An estimated 8- to 10,000 protesters have been arrested, detained, imprisoned, and placed under house arrest. Eleven lost their lives in defense of their right to their mother tongue.

What followed this heavyhanded crackdown was a full-scale cultural genocide campaign, the scope of which has extended far beyond the simple switch of languages in schools. "Learn Chinese and become a civilized person," has been an official slogan publicly promoting Chinese supremacy. Mongolian language programs have been removed from radio, television, and newspapers, or replaced with a Chinese one. Students are subjected to military-style training and must sing red songs to extol the greatness of China. Teachers are brought to the Communist red base Yan'an to receive patriotic education.

To justify the campaign, the Chinese National Congress announced last year that local laws on the right to education in minority languages are unconstitutional. The subjects of Mongolian culture and history have been removed from the curriculum for emphasizing Mongolian ethnic identity. All extracurricular activities for learning Mongolian have been banned. Mongolian traditional arts and performance have been altered to adopt a Chinese style to reflect the superiority of Chinese culture. Mongolian sacred sites have been taken over by Chinese traditional art performers, and Mongolian customs and ritual ceremonies are scorned and mocked.

Sculptures, monuments, and buildings with Mongolian characteristics have been taken down. Signs in Mongolian have been removed from schools, buildings, streets, and parks. Mongolian publications are banned, books have been removed from shelves, printing and copy services have been ordered not to provide service or any materials written in Mongolian. Postal and courier services are instructed not to deliver any Mongolian books and publications.

Starting in December 2020, a regionwide training program called Training for the Foreign Inculcation of the Chinese Nationality Common Identity was launched. All Mongolian students, teachers, government employees, Party members, and ordinary herders were targeted for the training. A 47-page pamphlet, marked as an internal document, was issued to detail the urgency and goal of the training, and to compel Mongolians to fully accept Chinese identity and Chinese culture. The document also warns Mongolians that



the wrong path of narrow nationalism can lead to the return of national separatism.

The trainees told us that during the training they had to denounce their narrow nationalism and nationalistic feeling. They had to surrender all of their social contacts and the details of their online activities to the authorities. They were forced to confess their supposed mistakes, including wearing Mongolian clothes and singing Mongolian songs. They had to answer multiple questionnaires designed to assess their ideological improvement. One of the questions, a trainee said, was: How many Chinese friends do you have? Those who answered “none” or “few” had to go through further training before they were allowed to graduate. Before their release, all trainees signed a paper promising that they would not engage in any activities highlighting Mongolian characteristics or expressing Mongolian nationalistic feeling. And this is what’s happening in Southern Mongolia today.

Considering these deteriorating conditions—China’s determination to erase the Mongolian language, culture, and identity and the lack of support from the international community—I would like to make the following recommendations to the United States Congress: One, conduct further hearings and testimonies to investigate the serious human rights violations in Southern Mongolia, in particular the ongoing cultural genocide. Two, establish a Mongolian language broadcast on Voice of America and/or Radio Free Asia to help Southern Mongolians have access to the free and democratic world. Three, introduce and pass legislation similar to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and Tibetan Policy and Support Act to support the 6,000,000 Southern Mongolians in their effort to defend their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thank you.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you very much for your testimony about the many, many ways that Mongolian language and culture are being impacted.

We now turn to Ms. Tethong.

**STATEMENT OF LHADON TETHONG, DIRECTOR,  
TIBET ACTION INSTITUTE**

Ms. TETHONG. Thank you, Chairman McGovern, Chairman Merkley, members of the Committee, and CECC staff for this opportunity.

As a Tibetan who has been working on the Sino-Tibetan conflict for more than two decades, I can say safely it takes a lot to shock me. But last year, when my colleagues and I began research into reports that Tibetan children were being sent to state-run boarding schools at an alarmingly high rate, we were stunned by what we found. Under the cover of darkness of China’s near-total information blackout of Tibet, the Chinese authorities have been constructing a massive colonial boarding school system that threatens the future survival of the Tibetan people and nation. These residential boarding schools are the cornerstone of a broader effort to wipe out Tibetan resistance by eliminating the three pillars of Tibetan identity—language, religion, and way of life. The schools streamline and fast-track this by ripping Tibetan children from their roots, by stealing the language from their tongues, and trying to replace their identity with Chinese identity.

In our report we find that at least 800,000 to 900,000 Tibetan children—representing nearly 80 percent of all Tibetan children ages 6 to 18—are now separated from their families and living in colonial boarding schools. And this number does not include 4- and 5-years-olds being made to live in boarding preschools. These children are forbidden from practicing Tibetan Buddhism, they're cut off from authentic Tibetan culture, and they're not allowed to study in their own language. Instead, they're forced to study in Chinese, under mostly Chinese teachers, from textbooks that represent China's history and culture, while completely denying Tibet's own rich and ancient history and culture. On top of this, they're subjected to intense political indoctrination.

Most Tibetan parents have no choice but to send their children away to these schools because China has shut down all the village schools and nearly all the alternatives. Parents who try to resist or refuse are threatened, harassed, fined, and face other serious punishment. One person from Tibet described the anguish of these separations for young children: "I know of children aged four to five who don't want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother's laps, begging not to be sent away and even refusing to go back."

My 5-year-old son started kindergarten this year. To think of sending him away at this age to live apart from me for the rest of his school-age life, to think I wouldn't be able to comfort him or protect him day to day is devastating. And to know China's doing this intentionally so that Tibetan children are isolated from the influence of their parents and families is enraging.

In the U.S., Canada, and Australia, residential boarding schools for Native American, indigenous, and aboriginal children are finally recognized as horrific and shameful mistakes of the past. Now is seen as the time for inquiry, reparations, and apologies, not as a time when any government would be deliberately implementing this genocidal model, and on such a massive scale. But this is exactly what Beijing is doing. China's colonial boarding schools, together with policies that severely restrict the use of Tibetan language, that seek to hollow out Tibetan Buddhism and end the nomadic way of life, threaten Tibetan existence in every space in Tibet. What's happening in front of our eyes is the annihilation of Tibet as a civilization, as an identity, as a culture. It is cultural genocide. And Tibetans everywhere know it.

Just last month, 25-year-old Tsewang Norbu, a famous Tibetan pop star, self-immolated in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. He had every reason to live. He was young, successful, college educated. He had a family and resources. His whole life was ahead of him and he gave it all up in the ultimate sacrifice at the most meaningful location and political moment for Tibetans, on the eve of the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan national uprising. His life and lyrics suggest he did this because he wanted to send a message that no matter what personal success we may achieve, what matters most is our roots, our homeland, our culture, and our freedom to live on our own land and be who we are.

Tsewang Norbu's final act illuminates a simple truth that's held strong in Tibet for 70 years under Chinese occupation—that gen-

eration after generation, Tibetans have shown that their love and allegiance is to Tibet, to the mountains, to the grasslands, to our mother tongue, our great sages, and spiritual teachers and leaders, most especially to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and not to China. Because Tibetans are not Chinese.

Though Tibetans and Tibet continue to battle courageously against China's onslaught, they can't do it alone. They need people and governments in the free world to step up, and there is so much more that can be done. I think global opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown us how much the international community can do. We need to use every tool available to fight these genocidal dictators, because a state that so blatantly flouts international rules and norms, and indeed actively seeks to undermine them, threatens us all. The fate of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kongers, and Taiwanese affects us all.

I'll end my remarks here and save my specific recommendations for the Q&A. Also I'd like to submit our report on China's colonial boarding school system in Tibet for the record. Thank you very much.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you. Without objection, it will be submitted for the record.

Now we'll turn to Mr. Abduweli.

**STATEMENT OF AYUP ABDUWELI,  
UYGHUR WRITER AND LINGUIST**

Mr. ABDUWELI. Thank you all for giving me this opportunity. Let me start with the historical narrative. After Chinese Communist rule, the Uyghur language faced difficulty—first, the Uyghur alphabet was revised. That meant that after 1949, Uyghurs could not read what their ancestors had written. For example, I cannot read what my grandpa had written in Uyghur. And second, in 1956, the Chinese government changed the Uyghur alphabet to Cyrillic and then we had another period of illiteracy and people could not read after five years—after 1940. In 1962, the Uyghur alphabet changed a third time, to Chinese phonetic Pinyin, like the Latin alphabet. And it was used until 1979. And then in 1982 it changed again. Since 1949, Uyghurs have experienced the alphabet changing four times. That means that we had millions of people becoming illiterate because of this alphabet changing.

Since 1982, our alphabet hasn't been changed, but our orthography, our spelling system, changed a lot—five times—and it gave people a lot of trouble, and you could not communicate with the written language because of this. In 1997, the Uyghur language started to be restricted, and in 2002, the Uyghur language was removed from higher education—from university, community college, and technology college. Uyghur was removed and replaced by Han Chinese in the education system. Because of this, in 2006, Uyghur intellectuals in Urumqi started the campaign to restore the legal rights of Uyghurs. This peaceful campaign ended up with one Uyghur sentenced to 12 years, Memtimin Elyar, and more than 10 Uyghurs were sentenced to different terms.

In 2011, I started my mother language campaign. I had my mother language kindergarten and because of this, I was arrested on August 19, 2013. I spent 428 days in a Chinese detention center.

And I was questioned, interrogated more than six months, and forced to “confess” that my goal in this mother language campaign was to separate from China and build an independent Uyghur country. I was sexually abused and experienced six months of torture. I spent 428 days without sunshine and without an appropriate toilet and without any healthcare.

Since 2017, the Chinese policy against Uyghurs has totally worsened. Uyghurs were totally banned from public life. Uyghur textbooks were collected and burned in front of the students, and Uyghur textbook editors were arrested. According to Uyghur Hjelp documentation, about 400 Uyghur writers who participated in editing these Uyghur textbooks got arrested. And 1,000 mother language teachers got arrested. Among them is my friend, Ehmetjan Jume, sentenced to 14 years. And three Uyghur intellectuals were sentenced to life imprisonment, and one was sentenced to death. His name is Sattar Sawut.

Second, Han Chinese officials were assigned to every Uyghur family so Uyghurs speak Chinese at home and have their cultural practices monitored. And third, Uyghur kids were displaced from their homes and forced to study at boarding school. According to Adrian Zenz, there are more than 900,000 Uyghur kids in boarding school right now. As we know, up to 3,000,000 Uyghurs are in concentration camps and their kids are in special kids’ camps.

I met two of them, because they are Turkish citizens, and they were saved by the Turkish government. I met them in Istanbul in December 2011. When I asked, they had forgotten their language in two years. They were arrested in March 2017 and released in December 2019. In two years they totally forgot their mother language. At the time of their arrest, the younger one was four years old. The other one was six years old. In two years they forgot their language 100 percent. And we can imagine that up to 3,000,000 Uyghurs are in concentration camps and their kids are in kids’ camp—so-called boarding school. And we can imagine what happened to those kids.

Uyghur kids, displaced from their homeland. For example, my niece, Saeda, was displaced from her home and from her homeland. Now she is studying in a Chinese boarding school in a Chinese-majority city, not at home. And Uyghur kids are forced to separate from their family and study and live in boarding kindergarten. According to Adrian Zenz, since 2017, boarding kindergarten in the Uyghur region increased more than 100 times. It’s increasing very, very, very quickly. Fifth, Uyghur kids are sent to kindergarten in inland China, not in Uyghur East Turkestan. It’s really dangerous and it means that we cannot find where they are in the end because they are submerged in Chinese society.

It’s really dangerous, especially the kindergarten in Xi’an. We don’t know whether they are orphans or not. Maybe their parents are in concentration camps. They’re sent to Chinese orphanages. Uyghur kids in kindergarten are not allowed to speak Uyghur. A social media video I received said that the teacher asked the kid’s name and the kid said, “I am not allowed to tell my name in Uyghur. I have to tell my name in Chinese.” Those kids cannot even tell their name in their mother tongue because of fear.

I waited to give this testimony for more than five years. Thank you, everyone, for giving me this opportunity. And I think we need to take urgent action, especially for those innocent kids who are separated from their family, who are separated from their homeland, who are separated from their culture. Thank you.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you very much for your powerful testimony.

The Senate is holding a vote on a required timeline, so I'm going to turn this over to Co-chair Representative McGovern. I hope to be back, but it's a little uncertain. It may be back-to-back votes. I just want to note especially the testimony about the combination of the assault on use of the language and ripping children out of their family's arms to separate them, change the language, change the culture. It's an abomination. And you all have made that very clear today, about the extensive use both in the Uyghur communities and Mongolian communities and Tibetan communities. Thank you. I hope to return, but if not I turn this over to Representative McGovern.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much. And I want to thank all the witnesses for your testimony. Let me begin with Mr. Togochog. In your testimony you advocate for the creation of a Mongolian language service through Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. As I understand it, Voice of America has currently, or in the past, broadcast in some 80 languages, but never Mongolian. Can you expand on what a Mongolian VOA service would mean for Southern Mongolians?

Mr. TOGOCHOG. Yes. Thank you. Thank you for the question. Neither Voice of America nor Radio Free Asia has any Mongolian service at this moment. And I don't think in the past they have ever had it either. So having a Mongolian service would be very helpful for the Southern Mongolians because the Mongolians do not have any channel or any way to communicate with the free and democratic world. Their situation, their conditions, are largely underreported.

And so if we have a program, a broadcast service, it will help them to understand what's going on in the free and democratic world, and at the same time also it will allow them to have their voice heard by the international community and expose the human rights violations that are happening in Southern Mongolia, in particular the ongoing cultural genocide that is aiming at the complete erasure of Mongolian language, culture, and identity.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. I appreciate that. And that's, I think, a helpful suggestion and it's something we should explore in the upcoming appropriations process.

Ms. Tethong, your testimony references the troubling experience in the United States, Canada, and Australia with residential boarding schools for indigenous children. Can you speak to your perspective as a native of Canada on how the Canadian experience can help us view what you report about boarding schools in Tibet in terms of accountability, restitution, and social justice?

Ms. TETHONG. Thank you. I think it was one of the most disturbing parts of what we were doing when we were researching and writing this report, that a number of us on the team of Tibet actually were Canadian. The unmarked graves of First Nation chil-

dren were being uncovered in Canada from the residential schools there as we were writing this report, and it was haunting for all of us. It also gave us a great sense of urgency to get this story out. Not that they're exactly the same situation, but that it's happening again in another place in a slightly different way, but the intent is the same.

I think for us, you know, the key right now is that people don't know that this is happening, because the Chinese have so effectively blocked information from leaving Tibet. They've scared people from saying what's happening on the ground. And they are hiding what they're doing. But the Chinese government cares what the world thinks, and this is why they have all of these hidden policies in Tibet. It's so that they can avoid international scrutiny. The boarding preschools or kindergartens for 4- and 5-year-olds, they're actively hiding their existence. We know there are preschools and kindergartens that are day schools. And we see those on Chinese state propaganda. But the actual boarding preschools they're actively hiding.

We know that the key right now is to expose and condemn directly and openly. We need the U.S. Government to do that. That is the beginning. That's where we start. We need the U.S. Government to work with like-minded governments around the world to put a spotlight on this issue and to say it's unacceptable and that these children need to be returned to their parents and they need to have access to high-quality mother tongue education in their local areas, just like any of us who grew up in free and open societies do, no matter how rural or whatever the challenges may be. I think it's important to note that in China itself the rate of students even in rural areas who are in boarding schools is drastically lower. Tibetans are boarding at five times the rate, in the case of one primary school comparison that we did in central Tibet alone, in what China calls the Tibet Autonomous Region.

I think the other thing that we need is to see—you know, the world has collectively condemned residential school policy, the practice of separating children from their parents in order to influence, to change who they are, to erase their culture and identity. And we need to see that the UN speaks out on this, that Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, breaks her silence on Tibet. She hasn't even said "Tibet" since 2018, when she took up this mandate. So we need member states, we need the U.S. Government to push for accountability also at the UN.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. You know, I was on a delegation with Speaker Pelosi, I think it was back in 2015, when the Chinese government actually allowed us to go into Lhasa and tried to micromanage and control every single moment of that visit. But despite all of those efforts, we were amazed and, quite frankly, inspired by Tibetans who approached us to talk about, among other things, the importance of their language, the importance of their culture, the importance of giving their children a future in which the language and culture were a reality. This is their identity. This is who they are. And it was a trip that, on the one hand, was depressing and shocking because of the Chinese government's repressive behavior, but on the other hand, inspiring and motivating because people, at great risk, found ways to communicate with us di-

rectly. And, you know, I will never, ever, ever forget it. And thank you for your response.

Dr. Roche, many of us assume there is a single Tibetan language, but you testify to the diversity of languages spoken by Tibetans. And I appreciate the map that you provided us. Would a person from Lhasa be able to communicate with a person from the Dalai Lama's hometown of Amdo?

Mr. ROCHE. Yes, thank you very much for that question. Just to answer that part very quickly, it depends on who those people were. There's a great difference between the spoken languages between Lhasa and the far-northern Amdo. If two people met on the street, chances are that they would not be able to communicate. But if they were educated in the common written language, if they had the experience communicating with Tibetans from a wide variety of backgrounds, then they would probably be able to communicate. There's flexibility around that issue.

But those are two examples of what linguists call Tibetic languages, which means that they are varieties of Tibetan. There are also about a quarter of a million Tibetans that use languages which are much more different than those—a group of Tibetic languages that are vastly different from each other. Regardless of whether they were literate, regardless of how cosmopolitan they were, regardless of the amount of exposure, and without concerted study, they would not be able to communicate with one another. To give an example that might help, it would be as different as Swedish and Italian, for example.

Most of the Tibetans who speak those languages, their communities are quite small, several thousand people among a broader population of over 6,000,000 people. And given the situation that I've described, where the state completely denies language rights in any forum—in education, healthcare, media, governance, etc.—those languages are facing a very serious predicament.

In terms of thinking through these issues that we're talking about today, about the impact of the denial of language rights, thinking about the state's goals and their thinking about the program of sinicization, and so on, we can think of these smaller languages spoken by Tibetans as the canary in the coal mine. They point in the direction of where the actions of the state are going for other languages.

What we see across all of those languages is people switching away from them. They're no longer transmitting those languages to their children. So, in an expert survey that I did of linguists who work in this area, I asked their assessment of whether those languages would still be spoken in future generations. And the answer was, in almost every case, that they would no longer be, that the children would be switching either to some form of Chinese or some form of Tibetan language.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Yes, and I'm technologically challenged, but for those who are watching this, I mean, this is the map that you provided us [holds up map]. All of these different colors show all the different distinct Tibetan languages and dialects, which I think is fascinating, something that we don't always appreciate, when we're talking about protecting a language.

How would an understanding of this linguistic diversity help the U.S. protect the Tibetan language? And you made a recommendation earlier, but maybe you can expand on it—how funding of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act could be used.

Mr. ROCHE. Yes, thank you for that question.

These languages face a very intense predicament. The speakers of these languages—also the people who sign them, because we should include Tibetan Sign Language here, as well—these communities have no support from anywhere. They want to maintain these languages. They—in instances where they can—create projects to support these languages—educational initiatives, community chances to use the language, and so on.

One of the most clear examples of the desire to use these languages was seen when the COVID pandemic broke in Tibet, and no public healthcare information was available to these communities in the languages that they understood best and which they trusted the most, as well. And so that was creating great anxiety and putting those people at risk, so they initiated these community public health information translation projects on their own, without any funding, without any support, and so on.

So the recommendation that I make—given that the Tibetan Policy and Support Act in part focuses on the protection of Tibetan language and culture—is the idea that funds could be earmarked specifically for these languages. And that money could be used, for example, to transmit information to those communities about language rights—the fact that they have them; how those language rights are denied. If it were possible to get money to the communities on the ground, to work with them, there are all sorts of projects that could be done to help those communities use their languages, develop them—for example, develop writing systems, recording the languages, helping develop vocabulary to use in new situations.

And there are ample examples all around the world of different projects, different methods, for helping to support the language that some of this funding could be used for, and that Tibetan communities inside China could learn from.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Well, thank you. And you know—I know USAID has money for this, and I think maybe we need to work with USAID to find a grantee that could actually do what you're talking about.

I have other questions here—I'm not sure if Congresswoman Steel is still on the line.

Representative STEEL. Yes.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. OK. I want to yield to you for your questions. And I'll come back to me.

Representative STEEL. Thank you, Co-chair McGovern. And thank you very much to all the witnesses.

It is alarming and disheartening that the CCP is working to restrict religious freedom and trying to eradicate entire cultures. The CCP is separating children from their parents, home, and community—I can't even imagine it. This is one more outrageous example of racism and troubling human rights violations at the hands of the CCP.



Having said that, Ms. Lhadon Tethong—if I pronounce it wrong, I’m sorry—but you mentioned that the private schools run by monasteries and Tibetan communities have been shut down by the CCP. We already heard Mr. Togocho’s recommendations of what the United States Congress can do, but what can global leaders do to stop this violation? I tried to let the whole world know during the Olympics what China has been doing, but I didn’t get any response from the Olympic corporate sponsors who’ve been spending billions of dollars. So could you tell us what global leaders have to do to stop this violation?

Ms. TETHONG. Yes, I think the key is—and we can see this happening more and more—for like-minded governments, global leaders, to work together and to coordinate strategies and approaches in a way that really targets—for example, the case of sanctions. I think this whole area, you know, unlike, say, targeting military or security people, officials, the area of education policy just seems—it’s such a different target. But there are Chinese academics and education policy experts who are conceptualizing and they’re operationalizing these programs—that are separating nearly a million Tibetan children from their parents, and that are essentially threatening that an entire generation of Tibetans, and those that come from now on, will not speak Tibetan.

So they are designing these genocidal policies and overseeing them, and they should be targeted, I think, for sanctions and other things. And governments can coordinate, I believe, to do that in a way that—perhaps, you know, the security officials and the top, top officials aren’t so concerned about their international reputation, or their travel, or whatever. But academics are. I mean, that’s so much of what it’s about—reputation, and your international credibility. And I think this group of people, who are playing key roles in all of this, the rollout and the separation of very young children from their families, they play a key role. And if we want to sort of change behavior and send a very clear message, I think they should absolutely be targeted with sanctions.

Representative STEEL. Very essential. Thank you very much.

So parents, not the CCP, have the right to choose how their child will be educated. That’s what we are practicing here; we try to. Why is the CCP so threatened by having a diverse community? Ms. Tethong.

Ms. TETHONG. I think the key is difference, that because Tibetans are not Chinese, because Uyghurs are not Chinese, Southern Mongolians—we have our distinct histories, our distinct national histories. This is about wiping out resistance to Chinese Communist Party rule.

And all of the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet over 70 years have failed. All of the violence—you think of their economic, their political, their military power and might, and somehow, Tibetans are still resisting, and a whole new generation of Tibetans that has no memory of a free Tibet, is still fighting. And that’s because who we are at our core is not Chinese.

When Tibetans are being taught only about Chinese history and culture in this intense nationalistic curriculum, they know that they’re not reflected there. Maybe it takes a littler kid some time to figure that out, but in the end, Tibetans know they’re not Chi-

nese. And when they leave these schools, or when they go out into the world, they face such incredible racism and discrimination that their instinct, of course, is to turn inward and to ask questions about who they are and where Tibet is in all of this.

And so I think this is about wiping out resistance to Chinese Communist Party rule in places where the Party rules with a colonial occupation, where the Chinese government has taken over by force and maintains control by force. And parents' influence needs to be—I guess, they believe—broken. You know, these children, if they're removed from their parents, their families, and their communities, if they can forget who they are, maybe that resistance will end. And I think they're sadly mistaken.

Congresswoman STEEL. Thank you very much.

And for Mr. Abduweli, you know, both my parents fled from North Korean communism during the Korean War, so you know, I've been hearing so much about the Communists. And now I am a proud American immigrant who is living her American dream. I speak Korean and Japanese as my first and second language, and English is my third. It is important to embrace diversity and to respect other cultures. I speak common greetings to my constituents and friends on a daily basis. Why is the CCP creating new language restrictions and engaging in religious persecution? What are they afraid of?

Mr. ABDUWELI. I think it's mainly because Uyghurs keep protecting their language. Especially after July 5th—we had a demonstration in 2009, on July 5th. And after the demonstration, thousands of people got arrested. And after that, the Chinese government changed the policy a little bit and gave some economic benefits to the people.

But at that time, I witnessed what happened, and for example, Uyghur books flourished, and Uyghur films flourished, and Uyghur poetry sold very well. Despite this economic benefit, however, Uyghurs were not fooled. Instead, Uyghurs increased in power, because of the economic development and people decided to keep the language alive, keep that language. And they used their money to support it.

And when I started my mother language kindergarten, investment was already enough. I had enough investment, and I had enough support. At that time, we had—when we started our campaign online, we had 500,000 followers online to support us.

So I think the main reason is because of this power—because of this power of identity, power of culture. They are afraid of this.

Representative STEEL. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Thank you.

I think Chairman Merkley is back.

Chair MERKLEY. I'm back and thank you very much. And I'll apologize in advance if I ask questions that others have already asked, but maybe they're worth reemphasizing.

And let me start with the depiction of a strategy by the Chinese government to universalize Mandarin among the entire population of China. Do you all agree—I'll just ask each of you to comment very briefly—do you all agree that getting everyone to speak Man-

darin is the ultimate goal of the sinicization campaign that we've all talked about today?

Dr. Roche, you want to kick that off?

Mr. ROCHE. Sure. Yes, I think it is. This is the goal—the policy has been in place for a while now. The plan has been set. The targets have been announced and shifted year by year. They target different regions as it progresses, and the aim is to have everyone speaking Mandarin, regardless of the cost to other languages, people's identities, communities, families, etc.

Chair MERKLEY. OK. Does everyone else agree? Maybe just speak very briefly to that, to basically wipe out every other language except Mandarin Chinese, over the course of the next couple of decades?

Mr. Togochoog.

Mr. TOGOCHOG. Yes, thank you.

Yes, their goal is very clear. The Chinese authorities are stating their goals very publicly. And they are saying all the so-called 55 ethnic minorities must adopt and embrace the Chinese Zhōngguó nationality, or Chinese nationality—that's the stated goal.

And eliminating language and forcing all those 55 ethnic minorities to speak Chinese is not the only goal. Actually, their ultimate goal is to turn these peoples' identities into the Chinese, or Zhōngguó, nationality, identity.

Chair MERKLEY. So, it's both about everyone speaking Mandarin, but the underlying goal is to wipe out the ethnic identity of people across China, basically genocide against dozens and dozens of the diverse cultures of the country.

Ms. Tethong, when you look at the strategies being used, including this absolutely horrific separation of small children from their families to boarding schools—I think you said 80 percent of the children are separated, about 800,000 to 900,000 children, if I got those numbers right. So do you see a path in which China, the Chinese government, is seeking to essentially wipe out the Tibetan language within another generation?

Ms. TETHONG. Yes, absolutely. And I think the focus now on kindergartens or preschoolers, the focus on 4- and 5-year-olds, really shows us that. These children are learning entirely from such a young age, entirely in Chinese, or Mandarin. And they are so young. They're also being taught—their psychological foundation will be sort of trained to think about Chinese culture ... because they don't live with their parents and their families for the majority of their lives. Even if they're just living five days a week in these schools, the idea is to really change them on the inside, who they are fundamentally, so as to wipe out resistance.

Chair MERKLEY. It's so much more than simply language.

Mr. Abduweli, do you also see the Chinese goal being to wipe out the Uyghur language within a generation?

Mr. ABDUWELI. Yes, the Chinese goal is, I think, not only to wipe out the Uyghur language, but also to make Uyghurs become, not modern Chinese, but make them become ancient Chinese. From my documentation, those Uyghur kids in camps, they're forced to recite ancient Chinese texts, not the modern texts, and they force them to wear ancient Chinese clothes, not modern Chinese clothes, and make them recite things not relevant to this modern society. And

I think the ultimate goal is, make them more Chinese than ordinary Chinese.

Chair MERKLEY. So Mr. Togochog, you observed that in January of last year—about 15 months ago—Chinese authorities announced that the legal protections for recognized minority languages are unconstitutional. Of course, it's the constitution, Article 4 of the Chinese constitution, that provides for those protections.

So, can we essentially say that the Chinese constitution has been invalidated by the Chinese government, and that the protection in Article 4 of the Chinese constitution no longer exists?

Mr. TOGOCHOG. Well, that's correct. As we all know, China is not a country of the rule of law. So yes, the Chinese constitution is still there. But at the same time, because of the Mongolian—the large-scale protests, they came up with the idea that—actually, the Chinese National Congress announced that all the local laws, including the ethnic minority autonomy laws and some other regulations on the minority languages, in particular the Mongolian language, are unconstitutional. And then they said, these must be changed. So that's their statement.

So, the goal is clear. They just use whatever method available to just completely wipe out the Mongolian language. And so in this effort, they even invalidate their own constitution.

Chair MERKLEY. And Mr. Abduweli, my time is running short, so this will be my last question. You note in your testimony that in 2013, there was a movement among Uyghurs to adopt this slogan: If the Chinese constitution protects our language, then it is our turn to protect it. So it's like, OK, hey, the constitution is our protection; let's protect locally—and ensure that Article 4 is followed.

But the Chinese reaction was to essentially say, no, the constitution doesn't really—we're throwing that out. So, your effort to seize upon those constitutional protections was, unfortunately, unsuccessful. Is that a fair way to put it?

Mr. ABDUWELI. Yes, that's correct. That's our slogan, and that's my—I tried to follow the law, and I tried to practice my constitutional rights. But in the end, I didn't succeed.

Chair MERKLEY. Well, thank you all very much. This big picture—China has abandoned its constitutional protections; it's wiping out languages. It's not just language; it's trying to wipe out the minority cultures across China, and that's the big picture I want to keep coming back to.

Senator Ossoff.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Congressman McGovern, as well. And to our panelists—I've got to briefly run into another meeting, so I'm going to cut right to the chase, and just ask each of our panelists the following question: Can you please share your analysis of how the CCP's increased repression of ethnic minorities within China fits into its broader long-term strategy for consolidation of political control?

Go ahead, Mr. Abduweli.

Mr. ABDUWELI. Could you rephrase your question? I'm sorry.

Senator OSSOFF. No problem. My question is, how does the continued and increased repression of ethnic minorities by the Chinese Communist Party fit into the CCP's broader long-term political and state strategy?

Mr. ABDUWELI. Yes, in Xi Jinping's speech made in 2014 in Urumqi, he used one very specific term, "break the root." It means break this culture, separate. Implementing this for boarding school, and boarding kindergarten and those things—implementation of his order to break the root means that those kids have their homes, their homeland, and their culture replaced.

Xi Jinping also stressed Zhōngguó identity. That's the only identity allowed in China. And that's why the Chinese government had these concentration camps and forced millions of people to speak Chinese in those so-called vocational centers.

And third, the Chinese government transferred the Uyghurs from their own homeland to Chinese cities. In 2020 alone, more than 50,000 Uyghurs were transferred to Xinjiang. The ultimate goal is not only to force them to speak Chinese but have them disappear into the Chinese majority of the Chinese mainland.

Mr. TOGOCHOG. If I may—can I respond to Senator Ossoff's question?

What's happening in China is a continuation of what China has been implementing in these three nations. Especially in the Mongolian case, the new policy, new cultural genocide policy, followed by the so-called second-generation bilingual education, is considered by the Mongolians to be the final step of China's overall cultural genocide policy that is intended to systematically destroy the language, tradition, and identity of the Mongolian people as a whole.

If you look at the history of the past 73 years, the history of Southern Mongolia, as early as the late 1940s, even before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party took over Southern Mongolia and implemented the so-called land reform movement. And then they executed tens of thousands of Mongolians and confiscated their land.

Then in the 1950s, the Mongolian elite intellectuals were persecuted. And then in 1960 and 1970, for example, there was a large-scale genocide campaign, actually. In this campaign, at least 100,000 Mongolians were tortured to death, and half a million persecuted. At that time, the Mongolian population was only 1.5 million. That means that one-third of the population was affected by this policy.

Then in 2001, the Chinese government implemented another set of policies to wipe out the Mongolian traditional way of life. The policies are called ecological migration, with a total ban on our grazing lifestyle. Under this policy, the Mongolian traditional way of life is targeted. Mongolian herders who graze their animals on their own land are considered criminals. And now they are targeting Mongolian language.

This is a continuing pattern. The recent policy is not just an isolated policy. It's a continuation of overall Chinese policy to destroy the entire nation of Southern Mongolia.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Togochoog.

Ms. TETHONG. If I may, Senator Ossoff—

Senator OSSOFF. Please, go ahead.

Ms. TETHONG. I agree completely. I think this is the continuation of destructive policies, and an intention to—really, Xi Jinping has just completely accelerated this genocidal project in Tibet and East Turkestan and Southern Mongolia. I think we can see that, with

the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping, there can be no challenge to their authority. And that's what Tibetans and Uyghurs and Southern Mongolians do by trying to maintain our distinct way of life, our language, our separate national identities.

If you look at China's threatening of Taiwan, if you look at the crackdown in Hong Kong, if you look at the attack on India, I think we can see that it doesn't end with—it's not like it's just about Tibetans or Uyghurs, what China considers its internal issues. It goes well beyond.

Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party have imperial ambitions. I mean, there is a belief that they have the right to rule over us, on their borders, and that they should have a greater position of power in the world—should have more influence at whatever cost and to wipe out dissent and to attack people fundamentally, who people are, to try to destroy or erase us.

We can see with Russia right now under Putin the threat that Russia poses to global peace and security. I believe it is the same with the Chinese government, and I think no matter what their propaganda says—trust us, they're very, very good at using benign-sounding, positive language to mask their intentions, but we know the truth of what they want to do, and they're doing it to us in a way the whole world can see. And I think that's why it's imperative on some level—it's also self-interest, I think, globally to help to try to push China back to stop these genocides that are happening before our eyes—because it doesn't just stop here, I don't think.

Mr. ROCHE. If I may just expand on some of those points there. With reference to particularly the groups that I've worked with—I call these unrecognized languages, unrecognized groups, in terms of state and political strategy. Originally when these policies were formed several decades ago, the aim of not recognizing those groups—and it was a deliberate process—the aim of that was to accelerate their assimilation. The idea was that those unrecognized groups would assimilate into the recognized 56 nationalities and then all of those groups would assimilate into a single, basically Han Chinese socialist unity. So, it was a deliberate strategy to speed up social evolution toward the socialist future, which would also coincidentally be Han Chinese.

And so when those structures were put in place—those structures of recognition, the legal structures, constitutional freedom for language, the policies of ethnic autonomy and so on—they were all done with an aim to deliberately drive assimilatory processes, and they have been working as planned for decades now. And we see that in the fate of these unrecognized languages, which people are no longer basically able to transmit to their children or can only do so with great difficulty.

Under Xi Jinping, in particular, that goal of accelerating assimilation has taken on goals which are primarily related to China's place on the global stage. It's taken on a geopolitical significance. Those structures that accelerate assimilation are now driving toward producing greater unity, integration, and therefore power that will accelerate China's place in the world order, which—you know, the aim is an ascendant China with a much broader, more important, powerful role on the world stage, and that place on the

world stage will be built on the deliberate destruction of these communities.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, all. Thank you for your testimony. And thank you to our co-chairs.

I yield back.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you, Senator Ossoff.

And Co-chair McGovern, did you want to ask a second set of questions?

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Yes, briefly.

Dr. Roche, you speak of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a mechanism for indigenous peoples of China to defend their languages. You say that the U.S. should formally endorse the non-binding declaration, as the three other countries who initially voted against it—Canada, the U.K., and Australia—have done. Would endorsement give our government a stronger moral position to urge China to allow its citizens to participate in the UN process?

Mr. ROCHE. Yes, it absolutely would give the U.S. a stronger moral foundation for making these claims against China. We see this repeatedly—that when these issues are raised against China, whether it's in diplomatic or governmental forums or whether it's in the media or social media, that whenever these accusations are brought against China—about what they're actually doing, the first strategy that they always go to is one of deflection—to deflect the query back on the accuser and to say, you have no right to accuse us of this when you yourself have done it in your past, you are doing it now, etc., etc.

Then they often go to other strategies of outright denial, conditional denial, and so on and so on, but the first rhetorical strategy is always to deflect the comment back on the accuser, and anything that can be done in that regard will prove the effectiveness of any efforts to hold China accountable for what they are doing—these assimilatory, eliminatory programs. Hopefully, that clarifies it for you.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. It does. Thank you. And thank you for being with us this—I don't know what time it is—what time is it where you are?

Mr. ROCHE. It's after midnight now. We started at midnight.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Well, thank you. We appreciate you staying up for us here. Thank you.

Ms. Tethong, regarding the residential boarding school system in Tibetan areas, can you expand a little bit on the elements of coercion? I mean, do authorities order families to send their kids away? Do they make it a *fait accompli* by closing local schools or is it something else? And how would we find out more information about the schools for 4- and 5-year-olds, which you say Chinese authorities are trying to hide?

Ms. TETHONG. Thank you for your question, Chairman McGovern.

Yes, the Chinese government is making it impossible for Tibetan parents to do anything but comply both because of the consolidation of schools—closing all the local schools, all the alternatives, the monastery schools, the Tibetan-run private schools. So Tibetans on the one hand have no choice in most places. If they want their

children to get an education, they have to send them away. At the same time, parents do, of course, resist and refuse, and when they do, they are threatened. They can be threatened with financial punishment. The number one thing is, if you don't send your child now, say, to boarding preschool, then they won't be able to go and join later—at grade one or in primary school.

And so Tibetan parents are really left—and Tibetans know—anyone under Chinese Communist Party rule knows you don't disagree, you don't push back—to do so in any meaningful way will be considered a threat to the state and you'll be charged or could be held accountable for some serious political charges, even though all you're trying to do is keep your child at home where you can protect them and watch over them.

I know with the boarding preschools—we're really working to try to understand more about the picture on the ground, and we need governments and everyone to be asking China about the boarding preschools. We've been hearing reports recently that Tibetan parents don't want their kids to go to these schools. They don't want to send them away so young. When they have to—like in nomadic communities, we've been hearing that one nomadic family will move to the township and live in their car to be near the kids that are in that boarding preschool, and the other families back home will take care of their work and their business. And families will take turns.

It's having a very, very detrimental effect on the life of nomads and rural people to have such small children taken away, and then, of course, the things parents try to do just like in Canada in the residential school history there, just like in the U.S. You know, when these children are taken away, parents try to go and be near them or do what they can to protect them because they're being taken out of their hands. And we need to know more. China needs to answer and tell us what the numbers are. Just trying to piece together this picture from Chinese state media, from Chinese government sources at every level, from Chinese academics and other academic studies—it really is an incredible challenge, and that's absolutely intentional on the part of the Chinese government to hide this—because they know it's wrong.

Co-chair MCGOVERN. Thank you.

I apologize, I have to go to another meeting, but before I yield back to Chairman Merkley, let me just thank this incredible panel. You know, this is an important issue. It goes to the issue of identity. It goes to the issue of China trying to wipe out an entire culture.

I think, Ms. Tethong, you had mentioned that one of the reasons they do this is to try to quash resistance. On the other hand, I could make an argument that their repression and their trying to rob people of their identity, I think only increases resistance in the sense that people are just horrified that there is an entity that wants to rob them of their identity, of their history, of their culture, of their language.

As some people have said on this panel, it's really important for us to be able to fund initiatives that will actually protect these languages and to find ways to allow people to have access to appropriate instruction to be able to pass this on to the next generations.



But you have given us some important ideas on things that we need to do in the upcoming appropriations process that will be coming up in a matter of weeks and also some follow-up questions for the Chinese government.

This has been an excellent panel, and I want to thank you all. I yield back to Chairman Merkley.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Co-chair McGovern.

I have some additional questions I'll continue with. Let me start, Dr. Roche, with the question as to whether the Chinese government is also trying to wipe out or start the process of eliminating the Cantonese dialect in favor of the Mandarin dialect?

Mr. ROCHE. Thank you for that question. I'll just give a very brief answer because this is not my specific area of research. I haven't done work in this area, so my understanding of it is from a very broad, general background.

Basically, in terms of policy, the same policy of erasure applies, which is that there is limited-to-no formal support for the Cantonese language. A lot of the support is ad hoc and superficial, which then makes it very difficult for the community to sustain their language. We know that in the past there have been protests against the imposition of Mandarin in the Cantonese-speaking communities, and interestingly, the protests seem to have had a knock-on effect in Tibet—in part inspiring language protests there, emboldening people.

I think that that's an important thing to note, that all of these language contexts are connected. When one group is able to stand up and defend their language, if that information is available to other people and they know that, that emboldens them, it encourages them, it reminds them of their rights and so on, which is important.

But beyond that, I would not like to comment further on the situation of the Cantonese language because I feel I don't have the adequate expertise.

Chair MERKLEY. Are all of the university admissions in Mandarin, all of the university exams?

Mr. ROCHE. Across the entire country or just in the Cantonese context?

Chair MERKLEY. Across the entire country.

Mr. ROCHE. Again, I don't think that I have the up-to-date information on that. I'll pass that over to—perhaps one of the other panelists would know. I haven't been able to enter China, so my on-the-ground access to information is now limited, unfortunately.

Chair MERKLEY. So for each of you, in regard to Mongolia, Tibet, the Uyghur autonomous region, are all the university examinations in Mandarin?

Mr. ABDUWELI. Yes, they are, and we had Uyghur exams until 2017, and since then, all college entrance exams are in Chinese.

Mr. TOGOCHOG. In Mongolian areas, yes, now all college exams are—they have to be in Chinese, and then, there was until recently—until this new policy, there was a very limited number of colleges that had some majors in Mongolian. For example, a Mongolian literature and linguistics major was—the students were allowed to take the exam in Mongolian, but now all this is changing. All students have to take the exam in Chinese.

Chair MERKLEY. Ms. Tethong.

Ms. TETHONG. Yes, I believe that's true, and it's important to point out that the pressure on Tibetan society and on the language and culture is coming from both sides. The children—the youngest children are having the language stolen from them, and those in higher academic study are suddenly not able to—so they amalgamated the different departments. There used to be Tibetan studies and Mongolian studies and Uyghur studies, and under the common language policy, they sort of put everyone together, and the only way to teach is in Mandarin because Tibetans will not speak Uyghur and Uyghurs will not speak Tibetan.

There have been Tibetan academics and education specialists who have been working hard for decades to try to promote Tibetan language and Tibetan curriculum and cultural content and everything, and suddenly, all of them are faced with no options to continue with their work. And the Tibetan language itself—I mean, as one Tibetan education policy expert from Tibet who was raised during the Cultural Revolution told us recently, he sees this—between the policy for little kids, the policies for higher education and, of course, what's happening in the monasteries and on the grasslands—he sees this, in a way, as a threat that could be the end of our history, and that just really struck me, when you think of it all together.

Chair MERKLEY. It was in that perspective of seeing these many, many different strategies from different angles in which I was inquiring, kind of, about the plan to wipe out the language and essentially the culture in a generation.

You spoke about a pop singer, age 26, I believe, who self-immolated. Was he allowed to sing? Did he become a star within Tibet or was he outside Tibet? Was he allowed to sing in Tibetan inside Tibet and become popular culturally in that language?

Ms. TETHONG. Yes, he was. He, in particular, was famous in Chinese circles because—he was known because he participated in all these Chinese talent shows, like the music, sort of, idol-type shows, and so he became really well known. But he would do—you could see in his lyrics and in his story, he really tried to promote Tibetan language and identity and to have a message in there about the importance of the Tibetan homeland, sort of without saying it, the Tibetan nation and our cultural roots.

And I think the key is, if you look from the outside—and this is what China will say—Tibetans have freedom of expression. Look, they sing in Tibetan; you know, you can see the kids dressed in their Tibetan clothing. In the end, they do allow a certain amount of cultural freedom and expression, but it is very, very, very constrained, very limited.

There was a platform recently—a Chinese social media platform—that was streaming a conversation between two Tibetan pop stars, very well known, and one was saying to the other, we can't do this—we shouldn't speak in Tibetan on this platform, or they will shut us down. So, you can see—

Chair MERKLEY. Yes.

Ms. TETHONG. You know, I think, really, within a generation we may see the end—if these genocidal policies are allowed to go

ahead—we may see the end of Tibetans who can even sing and express themselves in sort of secondary discourse in that language.

Chair MERKLEY. Well, it's a very powerful story when someone who's so successful and so young takes their own life in protest.

And can you give us his name once again?

Ms. TETHONG. Yes. Tsewang Norbu was his name, 25 years old.

Chair MERKLEY. Twenty-five. Thank you.

I want to turn to Mr. Abduweli. You note in your testimony that the written language was changed from a Uyghur alphabet to a Cyrillic alphabet to a sinicized Latin script. How much does changing the writing play into interrupting the generational cultural traditions and language abilities?

Mr. ABDUWELI. My father, when he went to high school, was educated using the Cyrillic alphabet, and then my mother, younger than him, was educated using the Latin alphabet. At home they have books in the Cyrillic alphabet, and they have books in the Latin alphabet, but no one can read what they say because it's a different alphabet. Then when we children started primary school, the first year we studied the Latin alphabet and the next year we studied the Arabic alphabet. And my brothers cannot read my books and I cannot read their books.

Because the Latin alphabet was implemented in the Uyghur homeland more than 20 years ago, a generation became illiterate, because the Latin alphabet was replaced by the Arabic alphabet and people became illiterate suddenly.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you.

Mr. ABDUWELI. We had illiteracy three times—use Cyrillic, they don't take it; know Latin and then they don't know the second or the third one. So they have a third generation dealing with this alphabetic change, and thus people become illiterate.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you.

Congresswoman Steel, I see you've rejoined us. Do you want to ask any additional questions?

Representative STEEL. I just want to say thank you, and that this is so necessary for everybody to hear what the CCP has been doing.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all the witnesses. And you know what? I'm going to speak against the CCP, and I've been doing this since I got elected in 2020. Let's work together and let's make sure the whole world knows what the CCP's been doing.

Thank you.

Chair MERKLEY. Thank you so much, Congresswoman Steel. It's a really valuable contribution, and it's so important to have these hearings so that more of us become educated and articulate about these forms of oppression.

I wanted to ask one last question, Mr. Abduweli, and this ties into a previous hearing we had. When you advocated for Uyghur kindergartens and worked to establish them—basically under that vision from Article 4 of the constitution—your family members were oppressed, and I believe your brother and sister have been imprisoned. We understand your niece, I'm very sorry to hear, passed away in detention two years ago after returning to Shandong from Japan. Did they face imprisonment for their own

activities, or was it retaliation, in part, to send a message to advocates abroad?

Mr. ABDUWELI. I started my mother language campaign on September 15, 2011—my first mother language kindergarten and then my mother language schools. Because of that I got arrested on August 19, 2013, and in Turkey in 2017 because of the Uyghur students that were arrested in Egypt on July 4, 2017. I received their voice message and written message, and I spoke up. Because of this my older brother got arrested, and I learned that he was sentenced to 14 years. Because of my activism, my younger sister was forced to denounce me for more than a year, from 2016 to September 2017. For an entire year she criticized me and denounced me and claimed that I'm a separatist or something like that, and then in the end she also ended up in a concentration camp and sentenced to 12 years.

And then in November 2019, I participated in leaking the Xinjiang file and the Karakax List. And because of that my wife's family members—because at that time we had some contact—got arrested. And so I think those are related. When I take some action, when I speak up, the next step is retaliation. So I think it's related to the retaliation—to get me to stop. My niece, when she was in Japan, told me really clearly that I became a hero, but her father and her aunt became victims because of me. I feel really sorry about what happened to her.

She went back to Japan because she was under the control of the Chinese police through the Chinese social media app WeChat. The Chinese police were always trying to force her to stop me, but she couldn't stop me. Because of this, she went back to China, and she died in detention at the place where I was first arrested and sexually abused. I feel very sorry about it. I hope this retaliation will stop and I hope these atrocities will stop.

Chair MERKLEY. It's absolutely horrific and I'm sure very effective in suppressing conversation about China's many assaults on human rights.

This retaliation against family for freedom of speech abroad is just—I think about this, and I think, why do we allow any import, any recognition, any validation of the Chinese government given the many, many crimes against humanity that we've witnessed through this series of hearings?

Thank you for sharing that story, and we all have great empathy with the horrific situation it puts you in and everyone who wants to speak up from their heart about human rights abuses inside China.

I really appreciate all of you on the panel for sharing your knowledge and experience. We have to keep speaking out. We cannot let Chinese pressure in any form—against our companies, against advocates within our country, against Chinese citizens abroad—stop us from scrutinizing and publicizing these activities. Without scrutiny, without publicization, there is no chance to diminish this strategy of wiping out the languages and the cultures of the many groups within China.

And with that—I know I have an official script here somewhere for closing—specifically, the record will remain open until the close of business on Friday, April 8th. And for any members who would

like to put additional things into the record, you are welcome to do so, and I extend that invitation to our panel of experts as well.

Thank you. And with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:48 a.m., the hearing was concluded.]



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## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF GERALD ROCHE

Thank you sincerely for this opportunity to testify today. I deeply appreciate the chance to share with all of you some insights into the language rights situation for people in China, and I thank the Commission for bringing attention to this important topic.

We must defend language rights because doing so ensures dignity, freedom, and equality for all people. Who among us would want to live without any of these?

When people are denied language rights, it severs their connections to their family, community, and heritage. It excludes them from political participation. When people are denied language rights in vital services like healthcare, their lives are at risk. And when they are denied language rights in education, their futures are at risk.

Millions of people in China today face these challenges due to the state's denial of language rights. This happens primarily in two ways: erasure and suppression.

Erasure refers to the state's refusal to acknowledge the existence of most of China's languages, by calling them dialects. To put this in perspective, imagine if German, English, and Norwegian were defined as "dialects" of a single language.<sup>1</sup> Imagine if your government told you what language you speak. How would you feel?

In China, erasure means that from the country's 300 or so languages, only about 56 are recognized as languages: one for each of the country's "nationalities."<sup>2</sup> Most people in China speak unrecognized languages, whether they belong to the Han majority or a minority group.<sup>3</sup> Most people in China are therefore completely denied their language rights.

Our research demonstrates the catastrophic impacts of this denial in Tibet.<sup>4</sup> Tibetan people in China use about 30 unrecognized languages,<sup>5</sup> not including Tibetan.<sup>6</sup> People who use these unrecognized languages face linguistic barriers everywhere: in schools, media, government, healthcare, the legal system and so on. When the government refuses to remove these barriers, people are forced to adapt by changing their language to either Tibetan or Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, recognized languages like Uyghur, Mongolian, and Tibetan, are suppressed.

Suppression happens through the gradual dilution of the Chinese constitution's language freedoms,<sup>8</sup> and the pervasive under-implementation of protections for minority languages.<sup>9</sup> Suppression also takes place through the encroachment of the national language, Mandarin, into spaces for minority languages—part of a broader plan to universalize Mandarin among the entire population.<sup>10</sup>

The cumulative impact of erasure and suppression means that at least half of China's languages are currently losing speakers or signers as they switch to dominant languages.<sup>11</sup> In an open, democratic society, people would be lobbying and protesting to change this unjust system. But in China, particularly under Xi Jinping, civil society has become increasingly repressed domestically, and isolated internationally.<sup>12</sup> In Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, wherever protest happens, the state sees foreign interference rather than legitimate grievances.

China's citizens will therefore be denied an unprecedented historic opportunity to defend language rights, namely, the United Nations International Decade for Indigenous Languages, which starts this year.<sup>13</sup> China will prevent its citizens from participating in this event because it denies that it has Indigenous people,<sup>14</sup> and it denies its colonial history.<sup>15</sup>

The goal of this Decade is "leaving no one behind and no one outside." We have a responsibility to extend this inclusion to people in China, to ensure they are not left behind or outside.

Here are some suggestions for how we can do this:

1. The U.S. must pressure China to clarify whether its citizens can identify as Indigenous and whether they can participate in the UN Decade. An ideal opportunity to do this is China's upcoming Universal Periodic Review in the UN Human Rights Council in November 2023.<sup>16</sup>

2. China's efforts to isolate its citizens from international civil society need to be countered. We must raise awareness inside China of language rights, and of activities taking place globally during the UN Decade.<sup>17</sup>

3. With specific regard to Tibet, earmarking funding for Tibet's unrecognized languages will make a huge difference. This can be done using funds allocated under the Tibetan Policy Act of 2020.<sup>18</sup>



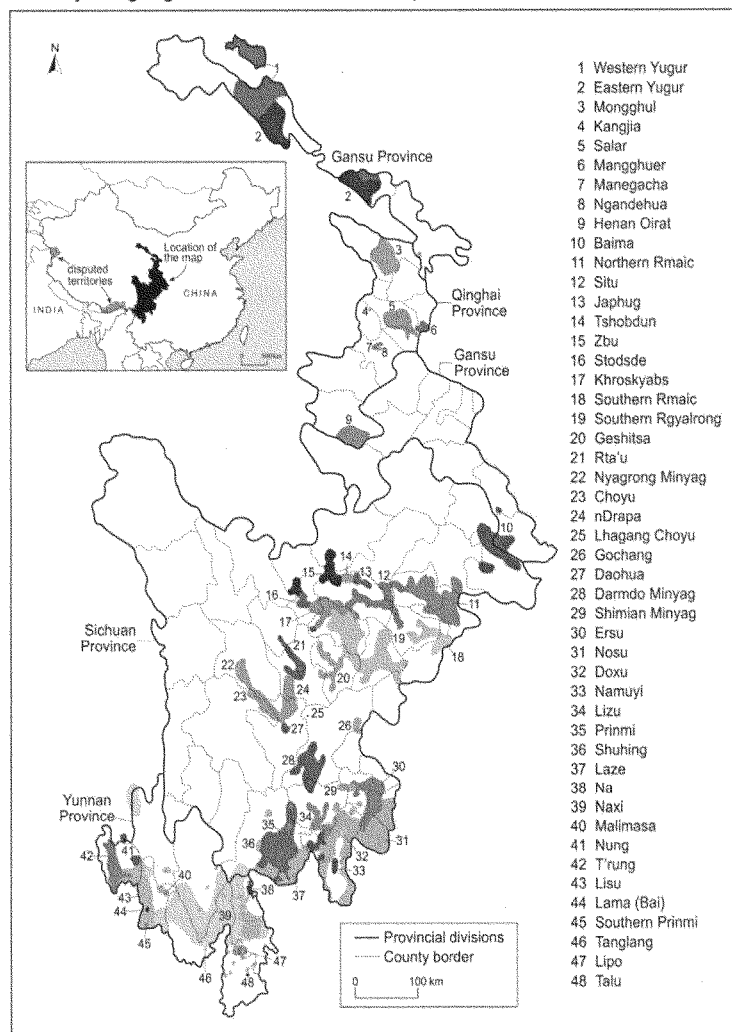
4. Finally, the U.S. needs to lead by example. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be formally endorsed, and its obligations respected.<sup>19</sup> Failing to do so will enable China to deflect attention from their language rights violations and onto America's.

Thank you again for your time, and if anything I have said raises questions for you, I would be very happy to discuss further.

[Endnotes appear after Appendix One.]

## Appendix One: Map of the Unrecognized Languages of Eastern Tibet

### Minority Languages of the Eastern Tibetsphere



Cartography: Chandra Jayasuriya. Language data: Gerald Roche and Hiroyuki Suzuki.



Map available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1199216>



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<sup>i</sup> This analogy is taken from the work of linguists David and Maya Bradley, see David Bradley and Maya Bradley, "Language policy and language maintenance: Yi in China", in David Bradley and Maya Bradley (eds), *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: An Active Approach* (RoutledgeCurzon 2002), 77–97. In exploring the relationship between nationality, language, and dialect in China, they apply the same logic to Europe and claim it would create "...one Romance nationality [for French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese etc.], one Germanic nationality [English, Swedish, Yiddish, Icelandic etc.], one Slavic nationality, and Basque, Celtic, Finnish/Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Romani and possibly Baltic minorities ..." (p77-78).

<sup>ii</sup> The term 'nationality' here is a gloss for *minzu*, a term that combines aspects of race, nation, and ethnicity.

<sup>iii</sup> The work of historian Gina Tam provides essential insights for understanding the emergence of contemporary language policy in China and the state's efforts to standardize Chinese languages, tracing the complex relationship between Chinese 'dialects' (*fangyan*) and nationalism in China from the mid nineteenth century to the early decades of the People's Republic of China (see Tam, Gina Anne, *Dialect and Nationalism in China, 1860–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2020). It is also worth noting that recognition and awareness of linguistic diversity among Han Chinese, and the complex, multiple identities attached to language, might play a role in countering the Sinophobia and anti-Asian racism which have intensified in recent years within the context of rising geopolitical tensions between the USA and China. On the role of Chinese *fangyan* and identity outside of China, see Ward, Shannon, Jingyi Ni, and Fong Pui Alison Chow, "Topolects in Motion: Narrative Possibilities for Language Vitality among Mobile Chinese-Canadians" *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* (forthcoming) DOI: 10.1111/jola.12361.

<sup>iv</sup> When I speak about Tibet here, I am not referring only to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), but to the broader Tibetan-inhabited areas in China, which stretch beyond the TAR and include parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces.

<sup>v</sup> These unrecognized languages are typically spoken by small, highly localized Tibetan populations, amounting to about 4% of the total population, or a quarter of a million people. Research on these languages has surveyed and mapped linguistic diversity across Tibet, and examined the broad policy regime these languages are subject to, see: Roche, Gerald, and Hiroyuki Suzuki, "Tibet's minority languages: diversity and endangerment," *Modern Asian Studies* 52.4 (2018): 1227-1278; Roche, Gerald, "Articulating language oppression: Colonialism, coloniality and the erasure of Tibet's minority languages," *Patterns of Prejudice* 53.5 (2019): 487-514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2019.1662074>; Roche, Gerald, and Hiroyuki Suzuki, "Mapping the linguistic minorities of the Eastern Tibetosphere," *Studies in Asian Geolinguistics VI—“Means to Count Nouns” in Asian Languages* (2017): 26-42. Roche, Gerald, "Introduction: The transformation of Tibet's language ecology in the twenty-first century," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 245 (2017): 1-35. I have also conducted research in several specific communities, most extensively with speakers of Manegacha, see Roche, Gerald, "Lexical necropolitics: The raciolinguistics of language oppression on the Tibetan margins of Chineseness," *Language & Communication* 76 (2021): 111-120, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2020.10.002>.

<sup>vi</sup> 'Tibetan,' meanwhile, is a single written language and cluster of mutually unintelligible spoken forms, see Tournadre, Nicolas. The Tibetic languages and their classification. In Thomas Owen-Smith and Nathan W. Hill (eds.) *Trans-Himalayan Linguistics: Historical and Descriptive Linguistics of the Himalayan Area*. (Walter de Gruyter 2014), 105-129. It is also important to acknowledge the existence of Tibetan Sign Language, see Hofer, Theresia, "Is Lhasa Tibetan Sign Language emerging, endangered, or both?" *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2017.245 (2017): 113-145.

<sup>vii</sup> Many other 'nationalities' in China face a similar situation. The 8 million Yi people, for example, speak some 60 distinct languages (see, David Bradley, "Language policy for China's minorities: orthography development for the Yi," *Written Language and Literacy*, 12.2 (2009): 170–87; David Bradley, "Language policy for the Yi", in Stevan Harrall (ed.), *Perspectives on the Yi of Southwest China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 2001), 195–213; Erik Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 2001)). Taiwan provides a useful counter-example to practices in China. Where the PRC recognizes a single minority



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nationality (the Gaoshan people) with a single language, the government of Taiwan enables Indigenous groups to self-identify, leading to the recognition of 16 distinct languages.

<sup>viii</sup> For an excellent recent review of language rights issues in contemporary China, combining ethnographic fieldwork with a legal analysis of policy documents, see Grey, Alexandra. *Language Rights in a Changing China: A National Overview and Zhuang Case Study* (Walter de Gruyter, 2021).

<sup>ix</sup> This policy regime is described with reference to the Tibetan case in Roche, Gerald. "Tibetan language rights and civil society in the People's Republic of China: Challenges of and for rights." *Asian Studies Review* 45.1 (2021): 67-82. This article discusses how the freedom to use and develop languages provided in the constitution is progressively weakened (Roche 2021: 3-4): "The Educational Law, for example, states that minority nationalities *may* use their language in education (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 1995). The regional autonomy law, meanwhile, seemingly provides a stronger basis for the provision of constitutional language freedoms: 'Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas *guarantee* the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages' (Congressional Executive Commission on China, 2006, emphasis added). However, this strong wording is diminished in later articles that describe how this guarantee is to be enforced. Article 37, on education, states that textbooks should use the native language 'if possible' (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 1984); Article 47, on the legal system, states that people's courts 'should' provide written and spoken translation for local languages (Du, 2015); and Article 49 states that cadres working in minority nationality regions should be 'instructed' (*slob gso gtong*) and 'encouraged' (*bsngags bskul*) to learn local languages (Klu mo mtsho, 2016). The weak obligations suggested in the wording of these legal instruments undermine the strong wording found in the constitution."

<sup>x</sup> One recent effort in this vein is the 2021 campaign to implement Mandarin Chinese education in preschools across China (see, Grey, Alexandra and Gegentui Baioud. "Educational Reforms Aim to Mold Model Citizens from Preschool in the PRC" *China Brief* 21.17 (2021) <https://jamestown.org/program/educational-reforms-aim-to-mold-model-citizens-from-preschool-in-the-prc/>). The changes to curriculum and teaching materials that precipitated the 2020 protests in Inner Mongolia are another example (see, Atwood, Christopher, "Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer" *Made in China Journal* (2020) <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/08/30/bilingual-education-in-inner-mongolia-an-explainer/>). James Leibold has extensively covered how these initiatives have gathered pace under Xi Jinping (see, Leibold, James, "The Not-so Model Minority: Xi Jinping's Mongolian Crackdown" *China Leadership Monitor* (2021), <https://www.prcleader.org/leibold-1>; Leibold, James, "China's Ethnic Policy Under Xi Jinping" *China Brief* 15.20 (2015), <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-ethnic-policy-under-xi-jinping/>; Leibold, James, "Planting the Seed: Ethnic Policy in Xi Jinping's New Era of Cultural Nationalism" *China Brief* 19.22 (2019), <https://jamestown.org/program/planting-the-seed-ethnic-policy-in-xi-jinping-s-new-era-of-cultural-nationalism/>).

<sup>xi</sup> Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2015. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 18th edition, SIL International, Dallas. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>. Liu Jinrong, and Zhang Qi. 2015. An Analysis of the Current Status and Language Endangerment of the Kucong Language at Shuitang Township in Xiping County. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 38(2): 215-224. Moseley, Christopher (ed.). *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (3rd ed.). (UNESCO, 2010).

<sup>xii</sup> Xu Shixuan, "Language endangerment", in Li Yuming and Li Wei (eds.), *The Language Situation in China*, vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2013), 261-70.

<sup>xiii</sup> Howell (2019, p. 79) has called domestic restrictions on civil society in China under Xi "the most sustained and severe crackdown on rights-based and advocacy groups since 1989" (see, Howell, J. "NGOs and civil society: The politics of crafting a civic welfare infrastructure in the Hu-Wen period." *China Quarterly*, 237 (2019), 58-81). These restrictions are enacted partly through campaigns against specific types of activists (e.g., human rights lawyers, feminists), but also through the promulgation of new laws, such as the 2016 Charity Law (see, Spires, Anthony J. "Regulation as political control: China's first charity law and its implications for civil society." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 49.3 (2020): 571-588). Meanwhile, the activities of international civil society organizations are now regulated under the 2017 Law on Administration of Activities of Overseas NGOs in Mainland China (see Holbig, Helke, and Bertram Lang. "China's Overseas NGO Law and the Future of International Civil Society." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* (2021): 1-28). My own involvement with China has tracked these changes since the early 2000s. In 2005, I moved to China to support a growing civil society sector amongst Tibetans. By 2013, restrictions on international NGOs meant this was no



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longer possible, and I left the country. Now, in my role as co-chair of the Global Coalition for Language Rights, I would not even try recruiting members from China, for fear of endangering them. I was also prevented from entering China on my last attempt, in 2019, presumably because of my critical scholarship and advocacy work.

<sup>xiii</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/dil2022-2032/globalactionplan>

<sup>xiv</sup> In a 1995 working group of the UN Economic and Social Council aimed at drafting the a declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, the Chinese delegate stated their government's official position as "there is no 'Indigenous peoples' question in China," because "the question of indigenous peoples is the product of European countries' recent pursuit of colonial policies in other parts of the world"

(<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/227459?ln=en>). UNESCO, in evaluating the outcomes of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, recognized this when they claimed as one of the Year's successes that it had managed to "showcase events and conferences on IL [Indigenous language] issue in countries where IL and IP [Indigenous people] are not recognized in law nor practice." A footnote on [this](#) statement lists only China as an example. UNESCO's report on the outcomes of the Year list only a single event in China, an international academic conference held in Changsha. Titled "Role of linguistic diversity in building a global community with shared future: protection, access and promotion of language resources," the conference did not include a noticeable focus on Indigenous languages, but rather 'language resources' more broadly. For further discussion of these issues, see Roche, Gerald. "Global Civil Society Must Promote Linguistic Rights for China's Indigenous Peoples" *Melbourne Asia Review* 6 (2021) <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/global-civil-society-must-promote-linguistic-rights-for-chinas-indigenous-peoples/>.

<sup>xv</sup> Scholars are increasingly recognizing the need to consider China's contemporary relationship to Tibet and Xinjiang as colonial. See: Anand, Dibyesh. "Colonization with Chinese characteristics: politics of (in) security in Xinjiang and Tibet." *Central Asian Survey* 38.1 (2019): 129-147; McGranahan, Carole. "Empire out-of-bounds: Tibet in the era of decolonization." Stoler, Ann Laura, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue. *Imperial formations* (2007): 173-209; Roberts, Sean R. *The War on the Uyghurs: China's campaign against Xinjiang's Muslims*. Manchester University Press, 2020; Roche, Gerald, James Leibold, and Ben Hillman. "Urbanizing Tibet: differential inclusion and colonial governance in the People's Republic of China." *Territory, Politics, Governance* (2020): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1840427>; Tobin, David. "Genocidal processes: social death in Xinjiang." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45.16 (2022): 93-121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.2001556>; Wang, Ju-Han Zoe, and Gerald Roche. "Urbanizing minority minzu in the PRC: Insights from the literature on settler colonialism." *Modern China* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700421995135>.

<sup>xvi</sup> The timeline for China's next Universal Periodic Review is outlined here: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review/China>. A second Universal Periodic Review will take place before the end of the UN Decade, providing a second opportunity to stress the issue.

<sup>xvii</sup> This awareness could be raised through Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, as well as various social media channels.

<sup>xviii</sup> The Tibet Policy Act currently allocates over 26 million dollars per year from 2021-2025 for Tibet, including 8 million dollars for Tibetan communities in China, 6 million dollars for Tibetan communities in South Asia, and 3 million dollars for exile governance. A portion of this money could be used to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Tibetan linguistic diversity; to undertake work that supports Tibetans in China who speak and sign unrecognized languages; and to increase governance capacity in exile regarding language policy. During the United Nations International Decade for Indigenous Languages, the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues should also give priority to highlighting linguistic diversity in Tibet, and the unique predicament of Tibet's unrecognized languages. For the full text of the Tibet Policy Act, see <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th-congress/house-bill/4331/text>.

<sup>xix</sup> The UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People enshrines rights to revitalize, use, develop and transmit Indigenous languages to future generations; to establish, control, and access educational systems and institutions in Indigenous languages; and to establish media in Indigenous languages. Within the Declaration framework, states are obliged to ensure that these rights are protected, and to provide financial and technical support, and to allow international cooperation, for the enjoyment of rights in the Declaration (see, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>).

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF ENGHEBATU TOGOCHOG

## INTRODUCTION

My name is Enghebatu Togochog. I am a Mongolian from Southern Mongolia, widely known as “Inner Mongolia.” Southern Mongolia is home to six million Mongolians, a population that is twice as large as that of the independent country of Mongolia. In 1949, Southern Mongolia was officially annexed to the People’s Republic of China, becoming the first so-called “Nationality Minority Autonomous Region.”

Over the past 73 years, praised as the “model autonomy,” Southern Mongolia has served as the de facto testing ground of China’s ethnic policies. These include genocide, ethnic cleansing, political purge, economic exploitation, cultural eradication, linguistic assimilation, social marginalization, resource extraction, and environmental destruction, as detailed below.

As early as the late 1940s, before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, Southern Mongolia was occupied by the Chinese Communist forces and was subjected to the so-called “Land Reform Movement.” Mongolian land was effectively confiscated and distributed to the Chinese, and tens of thousands of Southern Mongolians were executed as “herd-lords.”

During the 1950s, at least 20,000 Southern Mongolian elite intellectuals were persecuted as “national rightists” for demanding the materialization of “nationality autonomy” that the Chinese Communist government promised to Southern Mongolia.

From the late 1960s through the early 1970s, Southern Mongolia had experienced a large-scale genocide campaign carefully designed by the Chinese Central Government and carried out by the People’s Liberation Army and Chinese settlers. At least 100,000 Southern Mongolians were tortured to death, and a half million were persecuted. One-third of the Southern Mongolian population was affected by this genocide of unprecedented scale.

In the early 1980s, the Chinese Central Government accelerated the process of Chinese migration to Southern Mongolia. As a result, in 1981, a large-scale student movement broke out across Southern Mongolia. After a three-month-long, region-wide student protest, the Chinese Government cracked down on the students and arrested, detained, and imprisoned the student leaders and supporters.

In the early 1990s, Southern Mongolian intellectuals established a number of underground organizations protesting Chinese occupation and demanding national freedom. All of them were harshly crushed by the Chinese authorities. In 1995, one such organization—the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance (SMDA), which aimed to achieve the total independence of Southern Mongolia and ultimately to merge with the independent country of Mongolia—was declared a “national separatist organization.” The president and the vice president of the organization, Mr. Hada and Mr. Tegexi, were arrested and sentenced to 15 years and 10 years in jail, respectively, on charges of “separatism and espionage.” Nearly 70 other members were arrested, detained, and sent to jail for periods ranging from 3 months to a year. Mr. Hada is still under house arrest today after serving 15 years of imprisonment and an additional 4-year extrajudicial detention.

In 2001, China started a fresh crusade against the traditional Mongolian nomadic way of life. Two sets of policies, namely the “Ecological Migration” and the “Livestock Grazing Ban,” were introduced to forcibly displace the entire Mongolian herder population from their ancestral lands to overwhelmingly Chinese-populated urban and agricultural areas. These displaced herders became homeless, jobless and landless. The Mongolian pastoralist way of life and nomadic civilization were effectively wiped out. Southern Mongolians consider this a critical step in China’s overall cultural genocide in Southern Mongolia.

According to the Chinese Central Government State Council announcement published on its website in May 2012, by the end of 2015, China would resettle the remaining nomad population of 246,000 households, or 1.157 million nomads, within the borders of China. This means by the end of 2015, the millennium-old nomadic civilization was officially put to an end in China.

In 2009, the Chinese Central Government announced that Southern Mongolia would become “China’s largest energy base.” Chinese extractive industries, including major state-run mining corporations and thousands of ninja miners, rushed into Southern Mongolia.

In May 2011, a regionwide protest broke out in Southern Mongolia, sparked by the brutal killing of a Mongolian herder who defended his land from coal miners. Tens of thousands of students took to the street supporting the widespread herders’ protest across the region. The Chinese authorities responded with riot police and paramilitary forces to put down the uprising. Hundreds were arrested, detained,

and jailed. Resource extraction and environmental destruction were not halted, but only exacerbated.

#### ONGOING CULTURAL GENOCIDE

As the last phase of the cultural genocide campaign, in June 2020, the Chinese Central Government announced that it would implement “Second Generation Bilingual Education,” a new euphemism for the renewed attack on Mongolian culture. The goal of the new policy is clear: wipe out Mongolian language, culture, and identity and turn Southern Mongolia into a homogenous, worry-free Chinese society.

In response to this, starting in late August 2020, the Southern Mongolians carried out a regionwide nonviolent resistance movement. The entire Southern Mongolian populace stood up to the Chinese regime. From kindergarteners to college professors, from ordinary herders to prominent scholars, from party members to government employees, from artists to athletes, from lawyers to police officers, from taxi drivers to delivery men, all walks of life of Southern Mongolian society took part in the protest in one way or another. At least 300,000 Mongolian students went on a total school strike. The Chinese authorities harshly cracked down on the movement. An estimated 8,000–10,000 Southern Mongolians have been arrested, detained, jailed, and placed under house arrest. Eleven Southern Mongolians lost their lives in defense of the right to use their mother tongue.

What followed this heavyhanded crackdown was a full-scale and full-speed cultural genocide campaign, the scope of which has extended far beyond the simple switch of medium of instruction from Mongolian to Chinese in schools.

On January 1, 2021, all government mouthpieces, including the Inner Mongolia Radio and Television Mongolian language services, were ordered to start replacing Mongolian cultural programs with Chinese ones in order to promote “the strong sense of Chinese Zhōngguó nationality common identity.”

“Learn Chinese and become a civilized person” has been an official slogan publicly promoting Chinese supremacy over Mongolian language, culture, and identity. Slogans of “mutual interaction, mutual exchange and mutual assimilation of all ethnic groups to firmly establish the Chinese nationality common identity” have been aired repeatedly from television and radio stations across the region.

In schools, Mongolian students are subjected to military-style training and propaganda activities. Mongolian college students are forced to wear Mao suits and sing Communist “red” songs to extol the greatness of China. Mongolian teachers and professors are brought to the Chinese Communist red base Yan’an to receive patriotic education.

In a move to justify the total elimination of Mongolian languages from the entire educational system in Southern Mongolia, the Chinese National Congress announced recently that “education in minority languages as local legislations stipulated is unconstitutional,” according to the Chinese official press People’s Daily. This overwrites Article 4 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, which states, “All ethnicities have the freedoms and rights to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs.”

Local authorities in the Autonomous Region reacted promptly to implement this directive. Classes on Mongolian culture and history taught in Mongolian in local schools are considered to be “underemphasizing the Chinese nationality common identity and deliberately overemphasizing [an] individual ethnic group’s ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘ethnic sentiment,’” and hence are removed from the curriculum across the region.

In an effort to completely block all avenues of learning Mongolian, on January 9, 2021, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Department of Education issued a document banning “any school from gathering students to offer extracurricular learning courses or teaching new courses.” It strictly prohibited middle and elementary school teachers from organizing or participating in any training organizations outside the campus or any paid make-up courses organized by teachers, parents and parents’ committees, or inducing students to participate in any paid make-up courses organized by themselves or others; introducing student sources and providing relevant information to any training organization outside the school campus is strictly prohibited, according to *Xin Lang Wang*, one of the Chinese official presses.

Flagrant cultural annihilation is most visible in the series of arts and cultural performances put together by the Chinese authorities for the Mongolian Tsagaan Sar, the traditional Mongolian new year. Peking operas have replaced the traditional Mongolian art performance in TV programs. In some programs, traditional Mongolian dances have been converted to hybrid ones that exhibit full features of

Chinese operas. The horse-head fiddle, a traditional Mongolian musical instrument, has been played in concert with the suona, a distinctively high-pitched instrument often played in Chinese traditional music ensembles.

The most sacred Mongolian sites, like Oboo, a stone altar devoted to the worship of Eternal Sky and local gods, have also been targeted by this campaign. Chinese traditional performers like Yangge dancers have frequently shown up on Oboo sites to mock the Mongolian Oboo ritual ceremony.

Sculptures of Mongolian historical figures have been taken down and smashed; signs in Mongolian have been removed from schools, buildings, streets, and parks. The latest footage we received shows a group of construction workers removing the Mongolian letters from the official sign of the Hohhot City People's Procuratorates in the regional capital. In another photo, a group of Mongolian students stand next to a sign in Mongolian at their school entrance; the sign was scheduled to be removed the next day.

Mongolian publications are banned altogether, and Mongolian books are taken down from bookstore shelves. Printing and copy services on the street are ordered not to provide services of printing and copying any materials in Mongolian. Postal and courier services are instructed not to deliver any Mongolian books and publications.

On the official front, a regionwide intensive training program was launched. According to the Inner Mongolia News official website, the first session of the Regionwide Educational System Special Training for the Firm Inculcation of the Chinese Nationality Common Identity started on December 8, 2020. Although the exact details of the training and the total number of trainees remain unknown, the report confirmed that a three-phase training program will be completed by the end of March 2021. Other regional and local news revealed that the synchronized training sessions were held in all schools, colleges, and universities throughout the Autonomous Region.

A 47-page internal document entitled "Propaganda Pamphlet for Inculcating the Chinese Nationality Common Identity to Push for the Usage of Nationally Compiled Textbook and National Common Language Education" was issued by the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Department of Education in January 2021. According to a trainee who asked not to be identified, all the lectures, discussions, reflections, and quizzes are centered on this document.

Quoting Xi Jinping's remarks, the document "urges the masses to communicate and train together to take up the work of interfusing the feelings, to strive hard to create a social condition of living together, learning together, working together and enjoying together, and urges all ethnic groups to accept the great mother country, Chinese nationality, Chinese culture, Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics." The document also warns the Southern Mongolians that "the wrong path of narrow nationalism can easily lead to the return of separatist tendency."

Another trainee who managed to leave China and who has arrived in the United States recently told us that he and all of his Mongolian coworkers were forced to receive this training for two months. During the training, they had to denounce their "narrow nationalism" and "nationalistic feeling" and embrace the "Chinese nationality common identity." They were required to provide all of their social contacts and the details of their social media activities to the authorities. Toward the end of the training, they were forced to confess their supposed "mistakes," including their past gatherings where they wore Mongolian traditional clothes and sang Mongolian songs. They were warned that these mistakes went against the spirit of "Chinese nationality common identity." They had to answer multiple questionnaires designed to assess their "ideological improvement." One of the questions, the trainee said, was, "How many Chinese friends do you have?" Those who answered "none" or "few" participated in extended trainings before they were qualified to "graduate." Before the release, all trainees signed a paper promising that they would not engage in any activities highlighting "Mongolian characteristics" or expressing "nationalistic feeling."

From what is happening to the Uyghurs and what is happening to the Mongolians and Tibetans, it is apparent that the Chinese authorities are engaging in different forms of genocide campaigns on multiple fronts. While in East Turkistan, millions of Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples are locked up in concentration camps, in Southern Mongolia, a full-scale cultural genocide campaign is taking place. In Tibet, a similar campaign has been launched to eradicate the unique Tibetan culture and religious beliefs. Whatever form the campaign takes, the ultimate goal of the Chinese authorities is the same: wipe out the language, culture, and identity of these three peoples and force them to adopt the so-called *zhong hua*, or, simply put, "Chi-



nese” nationality. This goal is publicly stated and advertised by the Chinese Government across China.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the deteriorating human rights conditions in Southern Mongolia; China’s determination to erase the Mongolian language, culture, and identity; and the lack of support from the international community, I would like to make the following recommendations to the United States Congress:

1. Conduct further hearings and testimonies to investigate the gross human rights violations in Southern Mongolia, particularly the ongoing cultural genocide;
2. Establish a Mongolian language broadcast in Voice of America and/or Radio Free Asia to help Southern Mongolians keep their language alive and establish a channel to the free and democratic world;
3. Introduce and pass legislation similar to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and Tibetan Policy and Support Act to support the six million Southern Mongolians in their efforts to defend their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you.

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#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF LHADON TETHONG

Thank you Chairman McGovern, Chairman Merkley, members of the Commission and CECC staff for all of your work and commitment to support human rights and freedom in Tibet. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

As a Tibetan, and someone who has been working full time on the Sino-Tibetan conflict for the past twenty-three years, I can safely say: it takes a lot to shock me. But last year, when my colleagues and I began research into reports that Tibetan children were being sent to state-run boarding schools at an alarmingly high rate, and against their parents’ wishes, we were stunned and alarmed by what we found.

Over the past decade—under the cover of darkness of China’s near total information blackout and lockdown of Tibet—the Chinese authorities have been constructing a massive colonial boarding school system. These schools threaten the very survival of the Tibetan people and nation because they so wholly and completely target the future of Tibet—our children. And not just some of them, but all of them, even the youngest ones.

China’s colonial boarding school system in Tibet is the cornerstone of a broader effort to wipe out the current and future resistance of the fiercely proud Tibetan people, by eliminating the three pillars of Tibetan identity—language, religion, and way of life.

In essence, the schools streamline and fasttrack this policy by ripping Tibetan children from their roots, by stealing the language from their tongues, and by turning them into something that they are not.

And together with “common language” and “bilingual education” policies, and other policies purposely named to sound benign when, in fact, they are not, they represent an entirely new level of attack on the Tibetan people that threatens to irreversibly alter Tibetan life in every space in Tibet—on the grasslands, in the monasteries, in the universities, in villages, in cities, and even in the privacy of one’s own home.

As one Tibetan education policy expert from Tibet who was raised during the cultural revolution told me recently: “What is happening now is actually worse than the Cultural Revolution. At that time, they destroyed so much physically, but now they are trying to destroy the entire foundation of who we are as a people on the inside.”

In our report, released in December, we found that:

- At least 800,000 to 900,000 Tibetan children in all of historical Tibet—representing nearly eighty percent of all Tibetan school children ages 6 to 18—are now separated from their families and living in colonial boarding schools.
- This number does not include four- and five-year-olds being made to live in boarding preschools because China is actively trying to hide their existence. We believe this number is also very high.
- These children are forbidden from practicing religion and cut off from authentic Tibetan culture—beyond, of course, what the Chinese Communist Party approves of.
- They are being taught almost entirely in Chinese, by mostly Chinese teachers, from Chinese textbooks that reflect Chinese life and history, culture and values, while completely denying Tibet’s own rich and ancient history and culture.

- On top of this, they are subjected to intense political indoctrination which says they must be loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese nation first and above all else.
- Most Tibetan parents have no choice but to send their children away to live in these state-run schools because the authorities have closed the local village schools, along with most privately run Tibetan schools and monastery schools.
- Parents who try to resist or refuse are threatened with fines and other serious consequences. And, of course, the children also have no choice.

One person from Tibet described the situation like this: “I know of children aged four to five who don’t want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother’s laps, begging not to be sent away and even refusing to go back. Both the children and the parents are unwilling.”

This insidious policy—to isolate children from their families so as to erase their Tibetan identity and replace it with a Chinese identity—was developed at the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party. And it is blatantly racist.

Of course Tibetan parents want their children to receive the best possible education, but they don’t want to have to send them away to get it. Nobody wants to send their children away. Chinese people don’t want to send their children away.

A backlash against school consolidation policies in China led the State Council to rule, in 2012, that all levels of school should be, in principle, non-residential, especially for young children in grades one to three.

Three years later, after Xi Jinping came to power, the same State Council issued a decree for so-called “minority areas” to “strengthen boarding school construction” and “achieve the goal that students of all ethnic minorities will study in a school, live in a school and grow up in a school.”

Unlike in the past, where middle and high school students in Tibet had to attend boarding schools where we have heard firsthand accounts of horrific abuse and political indoctrination, now it’s primary and even preschool children who are also being targeted.

Any of you with kids, grandkids, nieces, and nephews will know that children at the age of four, five, and six, and even those seven, eight, nine, and ten are not that far off from being babies. They are sweet and vulnerable and they need their parents and their families just to manage daily life.

My five-year-old son started kindergarten this year and I was surprised to find both of us quite nervous and emotional over this rite of passage. But I walk him to school each day. And I pick him up each evening. Every day he gets to come home and be enveloped into the love, safety, and comfort of our family where I can protect him and look out for his best interests.

And I can teach and share with him—together with his father, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins—Tibetan language, stories, songs and dances, prayers and customs, and all of the other important cultural and religious practices and traditions of our family, our people, and our ancestors.

That this precious time of social and emotional growth—where the basic building blocks of identity are transmitted and cemented—is being denied to the vast majority of Tibetan children, and to their parents and families, is truly devastating. And that it is being done intentionally is enraging.

In the U.S., Canada, Australia and other countries, policies that separated Native American, Indigenous, and Aboriginal children from their families and made them live in residential boarding schools designed to erase or change their identity is something we think of as a terrible and shameful mistake of the past. We think of now as the time for inquiries and apologies—like the historic apology just given by the Pope to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people for the Catholic Church’s role in Canada’s residential school system.

It is the time for trying to repair some of the tremendous harm that was done and that continues to reverberate. Not a time when any government would be knowingly and deliberately replicating this heinous model, and on such a massive scale. And the reason China is doing this? The reason Xi Jinping is taking this genocidal approach in Tibet? To eliminate dissent and difference once and for all, by transforming Tibetans into Chinese.

But this is a genocidal project that is bound to fail because even after 70 years of a vicious and violent occupation, Tibetans continue to fight for their rights and freedom.

Because generation after generation of Tibetans—even those with no memory of a Free Tibet—have shown their love and allegiance to Tibet—to the mountains, the grasslands, to our mother tongue, the teachings of the Buddha, and our great sages, spiritual teachers, and leaders, most especially His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama—and not to China.

Just last month, 25-year-old Tsewang Norbu, a famous Tibetan pop star who was just signed, in December, by Warner Brothers China, reminded us all of this undeniable fact when he self-immolated in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. He had every reason to live. He was young, successful, college educated. He had a family and resources. His whole life was ahead of him.

But he gave it all up, in the ultimate sacrifice at the most meaningful and political location and moment, on the eve of the 63rd anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising in Lhasa, when security in Tibet is at its absolute tightest. He again demonstrated that no matter China's economic, military, or political might, everything Chinese leaders have done to try to convince, co-opt, coerce, and force Tibetans to submit to Chinese rule has failed.

After looking at Tsewang Norbu's lyrics and life story, I think he took this action because he wanted to remind us all that no matter what personal success we may achieve as individuals, what matters the most is your roots. Your homeland. Your culture. Your language. The freedom to be who you are. To live as you see fit in your own land and on your own terms.

But, of course, this is not possible in Tibet today under Chinese rule. Tibetans are being blocked from even speaking Tibetan on Chinese social media apps like Kuaishou and Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok. And even young children trying to defend their right to study and speak in Tibetan are being severely punished.

Recently, we learned that three students, 16-year-old Palsang, 15-year-old Sermo, and 11-year-old Yangkyi, were sent from a colonial boarding school in Markham County to a detention center for expressing their sadness over the removal of Tibetan language classes from the school. They are reported to have been arrested and taken away forcefully under the pretext of needing psychological counseling. It has been five months since they were taken away, and still we know little to nothing about their condition.

I think it is hard for people to fully understand what is at stake here for Tibetans. What this all means for our nation. Our history. Our survival. Language rights. Assimilationist policies. These are words that not everyone can relate to. They can feel quite cold or technical, perhaps even alienating to the average person who lives in a free and open society.

What I would like to do today is to explain the battle for Tibet's existence in a way that perhaps everyone can relate to better, and while this example and its parallels are not perfect, I believe it helps to illuminate what is at stake.

Imagine that Russia not only invades, but occupies Ukraine, as China has done to Tibet for the past 70 years. Imagine the beautiful Ukrainian children we see on TV, trying to flee the war with their mothers or hiding from Russia's bombs in basements, are trapped by Russian forces. Their parents and grandparents are killed, imprisoned, or ultimately, and only by sheer force, made to submit to their foreign rulers. After some time, these children are taken away from their parents. Not just a few of them. Eighty percent of them. Nearly all of them.

And they are made to live in boarding schools designed by Russians, taught mainly by Russians in Russian language, and with a curriculum that celebrates Russian culture and history and Moscow's military conquests in Crimea, in Georgia, Chechnya, Syria.

They are taught that Russia's invasion was for their benefit—that Ukrainians were liberated from Nazi rule. Every day these children have to raise the Russian flag. Every day they have to sing the Russian national anthem. After some time, most do not even realize that Ukraine was ever an independent nation. They do not know Zelensky's name. Or, if they do, they are taught he is an evil terrorist.

I know any good and moral person can see how wrong this would be. On every level. It's pretty much crystal clear at this moment while we all bear witness to the horror and injustice of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.

We would never accept it. We would fight against it and use every tool in our toolbox to make Russia stop. To save Ukrainian children. To reunite them with their parents. We would know we must refuse to let Russia erase Ukraine from our world and from history. That would be the course of action we would take. That would be the right thing to do. That should be the course of action we take with China. There is so much we can do. The world's opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown us how much power people and governments, both individually and collectively, have. Just as Putin's actions have shown us that a totalitarian state with imperial ambitions cannot be allowed to invade, occupy, and endlessly terrorize its neighbors—because a state that so blatantly flouts international rules and norms, and indeed actively seeks to undermine them, no matter what its propaganda says are its intentions, threatens us all.

Chinese imperialism must be stopped. Xi Jinping must be stopped. The fate of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hongkongers, Taiwanese, affects us all. I

will end my remarks here and save my specific recommendations for the Q&A. I would also like to submit our report on China's colonial boarding school system in Tibet for the record. Thank you.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF AYUP ABDUWELI

WHEN A LANGUAGE STANDS UP AGAINST ATROCITIES

Uyghur was recognized as an official language, together with Mandarin, after the arrival of Communist rule in October 1949. This did not change when the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was set up in 1955—Uyghur was preserved as the main language of instruction in the region, as it was before 1949. However, Uyghur orthography was treated as the remains of pre-Communist backwardness. This meant that the Uyghur Arabic script, which had been used for almost one thousand years, stopped being used, and was replaced with a new spelling system. This caused hundreds of thousands of people to become illiterate, and it also made a thousand years of written legacy unreadable.

Furthermore, beginning in 1956, the CCP treated the Arabic Uyghur script as representative of Islam, and a competitor and cultural threat to Mandarin. Officials set out to “revolutionize” the Uyghur writing system, and the Xinjiang language committee was ordered to change the Uyghur Arabic script into a Cyrillic one.

Uyghur linguists who didn't agree with the language policy were imprisoned, such as Ibrahim Muti, Abdurehim Otkur, Mirsultan Osmanov, and Reveydulla Hemdulla. Ibrahim Muti and Abdurehim Otkur, Uyghur scholars educated during the Kuomintang period, were imprisoned for 20 years. Uyghur teachers, publishers, editors, and professors were also arrested for the same reasons.

The alphabetic change in 1956 resulted in thousands of Uyghurs being imprisoned and thousands of books becoming unreadable, and millions of people becoming illiterate. Uyghurs were forced to learn a brand-new writing system.

Then, in 1962, the Uyghur alphabet was changed to a sinicized Latin script, aimed at unifying all ethnic languages under a Han Chinese phonetic alphabet. This created illiteracy, miscommunication, and discouragement among the Uyghurs. It also led to book burning and mass arrests of Uyghur intellectuals.

From 1966 to 1976, the Uyghur language experienced a Cultural Revolution which was imposed by the CCP. Most of the Uyghur elite escaped to the Soviet Union within ten years. There were more than 100,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs who escaped to Turkic-speaking Soviet republics because they were afraid of imprisonment and other types of physical and mental torture.

During the Cultural Revolution, every aspect of Uyghur life was “revolutionized”. Uyghur was “enriched” with “red” Mandarin revolutionary words. Millions of copies of books were burned. The Cultural Revolution treated the Uyghur script as the remains of the “feudalistic backward old society.”

At that time, books in the Uyghur Arabic script were treated as anti-revolutionary yellow books. The books were all collected from every Uyghur family and then burned in front of mosques. My father kept some yellow books in secret boxes, and when I was young he read some books to us from those boxes.

The Uyghur language was treated as an object of the revolution, and it was revolutionized by the Chinese phonetic alphabet. Based on my study of Chinese loan words in the Uyghur-language Xinjiang Daily of October 1st, 1970, the level of loan words reached 62 percent. This made Uyghurs feel marginalized, threatened, and endangered.

The Uyghur language enjoyed a short period of a golden age from 1982 to the early 2000s. However, the Uyghur language was treated as an obstacle to the modernization of Uyghurs. During this time, Chinese symbolized modernity and Uyghur symbolized being outdated, feudal, and backward. In order to reach the goal of modernization, the Uyghur language was forced to change its orthography in order to absorb Chinese loan words.

After the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the international war against terrorism not only changed the fate of the world, but also the fate of the Uyghurs' language. China has employed the international outcry against terrorism to curb Uyghur cultural practices, especially the Uyghur language, and has erased it as a language of instruction in universities, colleges, and technology schools. The Uyghur language has also been restricted in health care and other bureaucracies. This creates disagreement among the Uyghur community.

In 2005, Memtimin Elyar, a website administrator and IT engineer, started an online campaign to protect and recover the legal rights of the Uyghur language as stipulated by the Chinese constitution and the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law.

However, Elyar was arrested and sentenced to 12 years in prison. More than ten intellectuals were arrested at that time. In 2016, the intellectuals who signed the petition were also targeted by the government. All of the scholars who signed the petition have been arrested—Perhat Tursun, Kuresh Tahir, Kamil Rehim, and Qurban Mamut are among them.

In September 2011, another campaign was started to protect the legal rights of Uyghurs and preserve the Uyghur language as a language of instruction in education. I established the first mother-tongue kindergarten in Kashgar on September 15, 2011. My mother-tongue movement became so popular online that 500,000 followers followed it.

In September 2012, together with my friends Dilyar Obulqasim and Memetsidiq Abdureshit, I decided to establish a new mother-tongue kindergarten in Urumqi. Unfortunately, the application for this kindergarten was rejected by the authorities.

On March 19, 2013, we decided to start a joint campaign with Mongol, Kazakh and Kyrgyz intellectuals, because those languages were also in danger. We decided to hold a conference about how to protect ethnic minority languages in Xinjiang within the framework of the Chinese constitution, and how to strengthen the mother-tongue protection movement, and to base it on a legal foundation. We declared our slogan to be “If the Chinese constitution protects our language, then it is our turn to protect it.” For the conference, we invited Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Mongol scholars who worked for the Chinese government to discuss how to protect ethnic minority languages in Xinjiang under the Chinese constitution. After the conference, our slogan was popular in every city of Xinjiang, possibly because people thought it was a safe slogan to use. I think it was our last opportunity to try using this kind of action.

On August 19, 2013, Chinese security personnel arrested four of us—Memetsidiq Abdureshit, Dilyar Obulqasim, Abdusalam Abdurahman and me. Dilyar Obulqasim, Memetsidiq Abdureshit and I were held in a detention center for more than 15 months, 18 months, and 24 months, respectively.

Since 2017, language policy towards Uyghur has changed dramatically. Uyghur was banned from education at the end of 2016, Uyghur textbooks were forbidden, and textbook editors were heavily sentenced. All Uyghur books were banned, and Uyghur books in homes, at libraries and at bookstores were collected and burned.

Uyghur publishers have also been sentenced—30 percent of Uyghur publishers have been sentenced, private bookstores have been shut down, and the owners of the bookstores have also been sentenced.

Uyghur is not allowed at schools, even in schoolyards. Uyghur language teachers have also been sentenced, and textbook editors have been sentenced, with three of them sentenced to life imprisonment. According to the documentation of Uyghur Hjelp, more than 400 Uyghur textbook editors have been sentenced. Three editors-in-chief of Uyghur textbooks have been sentenced to life imprisonment, and one editor-in-chief was sentenced to death.

There are now 900,000 Uyghur kids in Chinese boarding schools. Uyghur children from the age of six are forced to live in boarding schools. Boarding kindergartens are mandatory for Uyghurs throughout the countryside. Millions of Uyghur kids have been separated from their families and their homeland, and they are victims of indoctrination under the name of education.

Han Chinese officials have been appointed to Uyghurs’ homes to force Uyghurs not to speak Uyghur at home. Unqualified Han Chinese teachers have been recruited from Chinese provinces, just to force Uyghur students not to speak Uyghur in the classroom. These extreme measures put the Uyghur language at the edge of extinction.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY

Before we turn to the subject of this hearing, I want to acknowledge that this is our first hearing since the publication of the Commission’s annual report on human rights conditions and rule-of-law developments in China. Every year, the rigorously researched and sourced work of the Commission’s nonpartisan research staff makes a profound contribution to the understanding of these issues in Congress, the executive branch, the academic and advocacy communities, and elsewhere, and that is certainly true again this year. When the Chinese government seeks to mislead the world about the treatment of Chinese citizens and the government’s critics, the fact-based reporting of the CECC Annual Report shines a light and helps document the truth.

Increasingly, this work informs and catalyzes meaningful action. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is the latest example in a string of significant laws

that grew out of the CECC's reporting. As Congress now works to advance China-focused legislation, it's crucial that it include tangible steps advocated by this Commission on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, such as expanded humanitarian pathways for Hong Kong residents and Uyghurs fleeing Chinese government persecution, as well as the creation of a China Censorship Monitor and Action Group to protect U.S. businesses and individuals from censorship and intimidation.

I'd like to thank the Commission's staff—incredible team—for its tireless, professional, and expert work preparing such a high-quality report. While it is truly a team effort with significant contributions from everyone on the staff, I'd like to especially recognize Megan Fluker, who played an integral role in eight of these annual reports and managed production of the last several before leaving the Commission last fall. Megan, I know you're on your next chapter, but we really appreciate your many years of dedicated effort.

Some of the most heartbreaking reporting details the genocide being perpetrated against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as well as elements of eugenics in population control policies directed at ethnic minorities. These are not the only ways in which the Chinese Communist Party seeks to destroy religious and ethnic minorities. Chinese authorities have engaged in a years-long campaign of "sinicization," requiring greater conformity with officially sanctioned interpretations of Chinese culture.

One of the most pernicious aspects of this campaign targets ethnic minorities' language and identity. Under a policy that promises "bilingual education," authorities in fact largely replace instruction in ethnic minority languages with instruction in Mandarin Chinese. Meanwhile, only a fraction of the languages spoken or signed in China today receive official recognition and support, threatening the ability and rights of unrecognized language communities to use and develop their languages.

These policies break promises made to ethnic minorities under China's constitution, under the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, and under international standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In this hearing, we will hear from expert witnesses about the sinicization campaign that runs afoul of these standards for protecting linguistic rights. We'll hear about recent substantial reductions in the use of Mongolian language instruction and the harsh crackdown on Mongolian culture that followed protests over these policies. We'll hear about insidious and widespread efforts to separate Tibetan children from their parents, placing them in boarding schools to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of mother languages. And we'll hear about the detention and imprisonment that often befalls those who stand up for language, who stand up for cultural rights, including the personal experience of one of our witnesses after he opened a Uyghur language kindergarten.

This coercive assimilation erodes language, culture, and identity for ethnic minorities in China. I look forward to today's witnesses helping the Commission better understand the costs to communities of these policies as we work with Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, and others to protect their cultures from destruction.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on language and identity in the People's Republic of China.

First, I join the Chair in welcoming the release of the Commission's Annual Report for 2021 last week. It comprehensively documents the Chinese government's appalling human rights record. The report takes countless hours to research, write, fact-check, and publish.

I particularly want to praise the Commission's professional staff of researchers for their expertise and skill in producing each annual report. They do amazing work and are a valued resource for this Commission and the entire Congress. These researchers do their work objectively. They check out every single fact. The reporting is impeccably accurate, which makes this report especially powerful. I can't thank them enough. Those of both parties who care about human rights ought to recognize their incredible work.

Let me quote from author James Baldwin in a 1979 essay. He writes, "Language is a political instrument, means, and proof of power. People evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate. And, if they cannot articulate it, they are submerged."

Baldwin was writing in a different context, but his message is one that anthropologists and political scientists confirm: that language is the core of a people's identity.

The People's Republic of China is a multilingual society. There are 56 official languages, and hundreds more that are not formally recognized by the state. On paper, language is protected under Chinese law. The PRC constitution gives ethnic minorities "the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs."

In practice, however, we are witnessing the exact opposite. Government policies appear to promote standard Mandarin at the expense of other languages. This is happening as the Party under Xi Jinping imposes a coercive conformity across all facets of society.

This trend provides the context and the central question for this hearing: Is the Chinese government and Party deliberately eroding the language rights of ethnic minorities in a quest for majoritarian political control? And in so doing, isn't the government violating rights guaranteed under the Chinese constitution and law?

This Commission has documented protests by Tibetans, Mongolians, and others against restrictions on their own languages. These protests are often suppressed. People are jailed for simply asking that their guaranteed rights be respected.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the threats to the Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uyghur languages under PRC policies, and what this means for the concept of ethnic autonomy. I also look forward to hearing about the vulnerability of the hundreds of unofficial languages that also deserve protection and preservation.

So again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing.

## SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

**List of Uyghur intellectuals imprisoned in China from 2016 to the present (Last updated by Abduweli Ayup on October 20, 2021)**

Medical Researchers and Doctors

1. Halmurat Ghopur, (M) Former president of Xinjiang Medical University, head of XUAR Medical Oversight Bureau, physician, PhD.
2. Abbas Eset, (M) Instructor at Xinjiang Medical University, physician, PhD. Note: He was released 2020.
3. Nurmemet Emet, (M) Dean of the Department of Uyghur Traditional Medicine, Xinjiang Medical University PhD.
4. Enwer Tohti, (M) Instructor at the Department of Uyghur Traditional Medicine, Xinjiang Medical University.
5. Alim Pettar, (M) Instructor at Xinjiang Medical University, physician, PhD. Note: released 2020.
6. Perhat Behti, (M) Vice president of the Affiliated Hospital of Xinjiang Medical University.
7. Abduqeyum Tewekkul, (M) Physician, Kashgar Prefectural People's Hospital.
8. Enwer Abdukérím, (M) Physician, Kashgar Prefectural People's Hospital.
9. Husen Hesén (M) physician, Kucha Hospital of Uyghur Medicine.
10. Ebeydulla Hesén (M) physician, XUAR Uyghur Medicine Hospital
11. Tahir Hesén, (M) physician, Kucha People's Hospital.
12. Nejibulla Ablat, (M) cardiologist, Kashgar No. 2 People's Hospital.
13. Dolqun Tursun, (M) XUAR Department of Preventive Medicine.
14. İlham İmam, (M) ENT specialist, Affiliated Hospital of Xinjiang Medical University. Note: released recently
15. Gulshen Abbas, (F) Physician, XUAR Nurbagh Petroleum Hospital.
16. Abdurehimjan Emet, (M) physician XUAR Uyghur Medicine Hospital.



## University Professors

17. Erkin Abdurehim (Oghuz), (M) Professor, Kashgar University, retired.
18. Metr him Haji, (M) Professor, Kashgar University.
19. Enwer Isma'il, (M) Associate Professor, Language Department Kashgar University.
20. Enwer Qadir, (M ) Associate Professor, Language Department Kashgar University.
21. Abdukerem Paltu, (M) Department of History, Kashgar University.
22. Erkin  mer, (M) Professor, Kashgar University, school principal.
23. Mukhter Abdughopur, (M) professor, Kashgar University.
24. Qurban Osman, (M) professor, Kashgar University.
25. Ablajan Abduwaqi, (M) Professor, Kashgar University; Dean of the Department of Mathematics. Note: Ablajan Abduwaqi was released in 2020.
26. Rahile Dawut, (F) Professor, Xinjiang University; PhD.
27. Arslan Abdulla, (M) Professor; Former dean of the Institute of Philology, Xinjiang University; Head of XUAR People's Government Cultural Advisors' Office.
28. Abduk rim Rahman, (M) Professor, Xinjiang University. Note: died in 2021.
29. Gheyretjan Osman, (M) Professor, Xinjiang University.
30. Tashpolat T yip, (M) Professor, President of Xinjiang University.
31. Alim Ehet, (M) professor, Xinjiang University; Founder of Uyghur Soft Ltd.
32. Dilmurat Tursun, (M) professor, Xinjiang University.
33. Batur Eysa, (M) professor, Xinjiang University.
34. Abdurehim Mahmut, (M) professor, Xinjiang University.
35. Erkin Imirbaqi, (M) professor, Xinjiang University.
36. Nurbiye Yadikar, (F) professor, Xinjiang University. Note: Nurbiye Yadikar was released at the end of 2019.
37. Nebijan Hebibulla, (M) professor, Xinjiang University.

38. Asiye Muhemmedsalih, (F) professor, Xinjiang University.
39. Abdusalam Ablimit, (M) professor, computer science, Xinjiang University.
40. Abdubesir Shükuri, (M) Professor, Dean, Institute of Philology, Xinjiang Normal University.
41. Abduqadir Jalalidin, (M) Professor, poet, Xinjiang Normal University;
42. Jemile Saqi, (F) Professor, Xinjiang Institute for Education, wife of Abduqadir Jalalidin. Note: released 2020.
43. Yunus Ebeydulla, (M) Professor, Xinjiang Normal University.
44. Ababekri Abdureshit, (M) professor, PhD, Xinjiang Normal University.
45. Nur'eli Shahyaqup, (M) professor, PhD, Xinjiang Normal University.
46. Nurmuhemmet Ömer (Uchqun), (M) professor, PhD, Xinjiang Normal University.
47. Kamil Memetréhim, (M) Professor, Pedagogical Institute, Ürümqi Vocational University.
48. Arzugül Tashpolat, (F) professor, Xinjiang Engineering Institute; Arrested together with husband Ekrem Tursun. Note: Arzigul Tashpolat was released in September 2019.
49. Zulpiqar Barat (Özbash), (M), professor, PhD, Xinjiang University.
50. Nijat Ablimit, (M) professor, Kashgar University.
51. Dilmurat Ghopur, (M) Vice Rector, Xinjiang University.
52. Abduréhim Rahman, (M) Associate Professor, PhD; Xinjiang University; husband of Ruqiye Osman.
53. Ruqiye Osman, (F) Administrator, Xinjiang University Library; wife of Abduréhim Rahman.
54. Imam Muhemmet, (M), staff, Xinjiang University Computer Center.
55. Weli Barat, (M) Former president of Xinjiang University.
56. Mutellip Sidiq Qahiri, (M) associate professor, Kashgar University.
57. Enwer Sidiq, (M) Lecturer of physics, Xinjiang Normal University.

58. Nijat Sopi, (M) Professor, PhD; Ili Teacher's College; Dean of Literature Department.
59. Barat Tursunbaqi, (M) Former president, Hotan Teachers College.
60. Ablet Abdurishit (Berqi), (M) Associate Professor, PhD; poet, Xinjiang Institute of Education.
61. Khalmurat Eysajan, (M) professor, Ili Pedagogical Institute.
62. Ömerjan Nuri, (M) professor, Hotan Teachers College.
63. Azat Sultan, (M) Chairman of XUAR Literature and Arts Union; Chair, Xinjiang Writers Association; Professor; Literature expert: Note: Azat Sultan was released in May 2019.
64. Gulazat Tursun, (F) professor, Xinjiang University Law school, Human rights specialist.
65. Kerimjan Abdurehim, (M) professor, poet, Kashgar Education Institute.
66. Adil Ghappar, (M) professor, Xinjiang Normal University.
67. Juret Dolet (M), Director of Student Affair Office, Hotan Teacher's College.

#### High & Middle School Teachers

68. Ablajan Memet, (M) Konisheher No. 1 High School.
69. Ehmetjan Jume, (M) Konisheher No. 1 High School.
70. Sajidigul Ayup, (F) Konisheher No. 1 High School.
71. Abla Memet (M) former head of Konisheher No. 1 High School, awarded teacher, National May 1<sup>st</sup> medal holder.
72. Niyaz Imin, (M) Former teacher, Kucha County No. 1 Middle School.
73. Ekrem Islam, (M) Vice Principal, Sanji City No. 3 Middle School.
74. Dilraba Kamil, (F) Instructor, Ürümqi No. 92 Middle School.
75. Tursunjan Hézim, (M) Instructor, Aqsu No. 1 High School.
76. Ablet Shemsi, (M) Instructor, Kucha County Ishkhala Village Middle School.

77. Adil Tursun, (M) Vice Principal, senior teacher, Kashgar Shufu County No. 1 Middle School; National-Level Expert<sup>(1)</sup> in chemistry.
78. Shahip Abdusalam (Nurbeg), (M) Instructor, poet, Kelpin County No. 1 Middle School.
79. Zohre Niyaz (Sayramiye), (F) Instructor, Bay County Sayram Village Middle School; poet.
80. Turdi Tuniyaz, (M) Former Principal, Xinjiang Experimental High School.
81. AlimYawa, (M) Former instructor, Peyzawat County Güllük Village Middle School; poet.
82. Ilham Tahir, (M) Teacher (fired), Affiliated High School of Kashgar Normal University; son of Tahir Talip. Note: released in 2020.

#### Journalists, Editors and Publishers

83. Ablikim Hesén, (M) Head of Uyghur Department and senior editor, Xinjiang Youth Press;
84. Yalqun Rozi, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press. Notes: Ablikim Hesén was released in December 2019.
85. Qadir Arslan, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
86. Tuniyaz ilyas, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
87. Mahibeder Mekhmut, (F) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
88. Ayshem Peyzulla, (F) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
89. Tahir Nasir, (M) Former head, former assistant head editor, Xinjiang Education Press; XUAR People's Government education inspector.
90. Wahitjan Osman, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press, poet.
91. Erkin Muhemmet, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
92. Ekber Sirajidin, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
93. Yasin Zilal, (M) Head editor, "Tarim" Journal; poet, arrested in 2017.

94. Abdurakhman Ebey, (M) Former chief, former senior editor, Xinjiang People's Press.
95. Ehmetjan Mömin (Tarimi), (M) Senior editor, Xinjiang People's Press , PhD.
96. Qurban Mamut, (M) Former head editor, former senior editor, "Xinjiang Culture" Journal.
97. Ilham Weli, (M) Chair, senior editor, "Xinjiang Gazette" Uyghur Editorial Department.
98. Mirkamil Ablimit, (M) Vice Chair, senior editor, "Xinjiang Gazette" Uyghur Editorial Department.
99. Memtimin Obul, (M) Editor, "Xinjiang Gazette" Uyghur Editorial Department.
100. Jür'et Haji, (M) Editor, "Xinjiang Gazette" Uyghur Editorial Department.
101. Erkin Tursun, (M) Editor, director, Ili Television Station.
102. Abdurêhim Abdulla, (M) Senior editor, Xinjiang Audiovisual Press; poet.
103. Enwer Qutluq (Nezeri), (M) Editor, Xinjiang Television Station; poet.
104. Qeyser Qéyum, (M) Editor in Chief, "Literary Translations" Journal Committed suicide, jumped off the eighth floor of his office building after a police summons rather than face probable detention in the camps.
105. Mirzahit Kérîm, (M) Former editor (retired), Kashgar Uyghur Press; writer, died in detention 2020.
106. Mehmütjan Khoja (Ümidwar), (M) Editor, "Xinjiang Youth" Journal; poet.
107. Ablajan Siyit, (M) Vice head editor, senior editor, Kashgar Uyghur Press.
108. Osman Zunun, (M) Former head editor, senior editor, Kashgar Uyghur Press, retired.
109. Abliz Ömer, (M) Former head editor, senior editor, Kashgar Uyghur Press, retired.
110. Osman Ehet, (M) music editor, Qarluq Electronic.
111. Erkin Ibrahim, (peyda) (M) publisher, CEO of ogen Publishing Company.
112. Chimen'gül Awut, (F) Senior editor, Kashgar Uyghur Publishers; poet. Note: Chimengul Awut was released in 2020.

113. Tahir Talip, (M) senior editor, "Kashgar Daily," poet, public figure. Note: released 2020.
114. Khalide Isra'il, (F) Editor, "Xinjiang Gazette," retired; writer. Note: released 2020.
115. Méhriǵül Tahir, (F) Instructor, Kashgar Preschool Teachers Training School; daughter of Tahir Talip.
116. Abdurahman Abdurehim, (M) Kashgar Uyghur press, editor.
117. Memetjan Abliz Boriyar, (M) Kashgar Uyghur Press, editor, writer.
118. Memet Sidiq, (M) Kashgar Uyghur Press.
119. Anargul Hekim, (F) Kashgar Uyghur Press.
120. Guzelnur Qasim, (F) Kashgar Uyghur Press.
121. Mahinur Hamut, (F) Kashgar Uyghur Press.
122. Erkin Emet, (M) Head of Kashgar Uyghur Press.
123. Emrulla Enwer, (M) Kashgar Uyghur Press.

Poets, Writers and Scholars

124. Perhat Tursun, (M) Researcher, XUAR People's Arts Center; PhD; writer, poet.
125. Abbas Muniyaz, (M) Professional writer, XUAR Writers' Association.
126. Muhter Helil Bughra, (M) Poet, XUAR TV Station. Note: he was released recently.
127. Idris Nurulla, (M) Independent translator, poet.
128. Qasimjan Osman (Ghazi), (M) Civil servant, Peyzawat County Party Committee Propaganda Department; poet.
129. Yasin Jan Sadiq (choghlan), (M) writer, XUAR Writers Association.
130. Osman Hoshur, (M) Writer, participant of Uyghur textbook.
131. Memet Emet Chopani, Writer, poet.
132. Ibrahim Alptekin, (M) former police officer, poet, writer, publisher, Artush.

133. Abduqadir Jüme, (M) Independent translator, poet.
134. Nezire Muhemmedsalih, (F) Independent writer; wife of Adiljan Tuniyaz.
135. Muhemmedsalih Hajim, (M) Researcher, Xinjiang Social Science Academy, retired; translator of the Quran into Uyghur; religious scholar and translator; died at age 84 in a camp; father of Nezire Muhemmedsalih.
136. Memet'éliAbdurehim, (M ) Former head of XUAR Language Committee, retired.  
Note: released in 2020.
137. Tahir Abduweli, (M) Researcher, XUAR Language Committee.
138. Alimjan, (M) Researcher, XUAR Language Committee.
139. Na'iljanTurghan, (M) Researcher, XUAR Language Committee.
140. Küresh Tahir, (M) Researcher, Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy; son of Tahir Talip.
141. Abdurazaq Sayim, (M) Vice Head of Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy; senior researcher.
142. Gheyret Abdurahman, (M) Researcher, Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy; Vice Head, Language Institute, Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy. Note: released in 2019.
143. Abduqéyum Mijit, (M) Researcher, Ethnic Culture Research Institute, Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy.
144. Sajide Tursun, (F) Postdoctoral researcher at Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious Diversity in Gottingen, Germany. Note: Sajide Tursun was released at the end of 2019.
145. Abbas Burhan, (M) Researcher, XUAR Education Department; Vice Principal, Ürümqi Number 10 Elementary School.
146. Ablimit, (M), Independent researcher of Uyghur classical literature; PhD.
147. Gulbahar Eziz, Writer, Poet, Lawyer.<sup>[15]</sup> Note: released in 2020.
148. AdiljanTuniyaz, (M) Former staff, Xinjiang People's Radio Station; poet; husband of Nezire Muhemmedsalih.
149. Dilmurat Tursun, (M) researcher, Urumqi Municipal education department.
150. Adil Rishit, (M) researcher, XUAR Educational Press.

151. Tursunjan Muhemmet Marshal, website editor, writer.
152. Tursunbeg Yasin, (M) Blogger, writer.
153. Tuniyaz Osman, (M) writer, former judge, Aksu Seismology Department.
154. Omerjan Hesén (Bozqir), writer, translator, blogger, Aksu Forestry Department

Actors, Directors, Hosts, Hostess, Singers

155. Mekhmutjan Sidiq, (M) Director, Xinjiang Television Station.
156. Ekhmetjan Metrozi, (M) Technician, Xinjiang Television Station.
157. Qeyum Muhemmet, (M) Associate Professor, Xinjiang Art Institute; actor; host; husband of Aynur Tash.
158. Aynur Tash, (F) Ürümqi People's Radio Station, retired for health reasons; wife of Qéyum Muhemmet.
159. Erkin Tursun, (M) Editor, director, Ili Television Station.
160. Es'et Éziz, (M) Chief, Ürümqi People's Radio Station Uyghur Editorial Department.
161. Abdushukur Wahit, (M) film editor, Urumqi Sezgu Advertisement company. Note: released at end of 2019.
162. Abdurehim Heyit, (M) singer XUAR Theater.
163. Zulpiqar Koresh, (M) host of Uyghur TV program, XUAR TV station.
164. Reshide Dawut, (F) singer, XUAR theater. Note: Reshide Dawut was sentenced in 2020.
165. Adil Mijit, (M) comedian, XUAR Theater. Note: released recently.
166. Senuber Tursun, (F) singer, XUAR theater: Note: Senewer Tursun was released in October 2019.
167. Aytilla Ela, (F) singer, XUAR Theater.
168. Ablet Zeydin, (M) XUAR TV station, editor.



169. Peride Mamut, (M) singer, actor, Karamay Theater. Note: released at the end of 2019.
170. Zahirshah Ablimit, (M) singer. Note: released 2020.
171. Ablajan Awut Ayup, (M) singer, "Uyghur Justin Bieber."
172. Memetjan Abduqadir, (M) singer, actor.
173. Mahire Yusup, (F) singer, Urumqi Song and Dance Troup.
174. Adiljan Hamut, (M) Cameraman, Xinjiang Izgil Film & TV company. Note: Released at the end of 2019.

#### Computer Engineers

175. Qeyser Abdukerim, (M) computer engineer, poet. Kashgar Tax department.
176. Metyasın Metqurban, (M) Bilkan electronic company, CEO, computer engineer.
177. Perhat Zahir, (M) computer engineer.
178. Abdurahman Memetabla, (M) computer engineer, CEO, Rawanyol electronic company.
179. Nurshat, (M) Graphic designer, Qarluq Electronic Company.
180. Abletjan Ismail, (M) Creator of Yaltapan software, IT engineer of XUAR Government website ts.cn.
181. Sirajidin Qarluq, (M) Qarluq Electronic Co. Ltd.
182. Amannisa Qemirdin, (F) accountant, IT engineer, Qarluq Electronic Company.
183. Reyhangul Mehmet, (F) graphic designer, Qarluq Electronic.
184. Yusup Ehmet, (M) graphic designer, Qarluq Electronic.
185. Emetjan, (M) Qutlan Electronic Company, computer engineer.
186. Mukhtar Rozi, (M) Computer expert; programmer.
187. Ekpar Asat, (M) Website designer, CEO, Bagdax Electronic.

188. Dilshat Perhat (Ataman), (M) Founder, "Diyarim" Website.

#### Photographers and Painters

189. Nijat Memtimin, (M) Employee, Kashgar Prefectural Government Information Office; photographer.

190. Mutellipjan Memtimin, (M) Director of "Kashgar White Steed Photo Studio"; photographer.

191. Ablikimjan (M), designer, Kashgar Preschool Teachers School.

#### Other Intellectuals

192. Ablimit Ablikim, (M) MA student, Shanghai Arts Institute.

193. Arzugül Abdurehim, (F) Received MA in Japan.

194. Abdurishit Imin, (M) XUAR Department of Agriculture.

195. Gülbahar ʻÉziz, (F) Civil servant, XUAR Prison Administration Office; psychology counselor; lawyer.

196. Ghalip Qurban, (M) vice chief, Urumqi Municipal Court judge.

197. Ekber Ebeydulla, (M) Kashgar Cultural Heritage Protecting Department.

198. Ebeydulla Ibrahim, (M) Writer, Editor in Chief, Xinjiang Youth.

199. Mihray Mijit, (F), Principal of #20 Primary School, Editor of Uyghur Textbook.

200. Abduqadirjan Rozi, (M) PhD student, Zhongshan University, Guangzhou.

#### Imprisoned Intellectuals From Other Turkic Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang

201. Qabilqan Sadiq, (M) Editor, Xinjiang Education Press; Kazakh.

202. Esqer Junus, (M) Researcher, Xinjiang Social Sciences Academy; Kyrgyz.

203. Hörmetjan Abdurahman (Fikret), (M) Professor, Xinjiang University; Uzbek.

- 204. Mambet Turdi, (M) Professor, Xinjiang Normal University; literary critic; Kyrgyz.
- 205. Abdurahman Eziz, (M) Writer, Ermudun, Yengisheher, Kashgar, Kyrgyz.
- 206. Dina Igemberdi, (F) Painter, Urumqi Tianshan District, Tuanjielu, No 78. Kazakh.
- 207. Nurbaqit Qadir, (M) editor, Xinjiang Education Press Kazakh.
- 208. Maqadas Aqan, (M) editor, Xinjiang Education Press Kazakh.

Other Intellectuals

- 209. Turan Qasim, (M) CCP XUAR Regional Committee, propaganda branch.
- 210. Jelil Abdurahman, (M) Urumqi Education Department.
- 211. Hamut Yasin (M), Xinjiang Education Press.
- 212. Abduqeyum Tohtaji, (M) Xinjiang Experiment High school.
- 213. Aygul Imin, (F) Teaching & Study office of Tianshan District, Urumqi Education Department.
- 214. Mahire Rozi, (F), teacher, Urumqi #16 High School.
- 215. Abdusalam Turdi, (M) professor, Department of Physics, Xinjiang Normal University.
- 216. Enwer Sidiq, (M) professor, Department of Physics, Xinjiang Normal University.
- 217. Ghalip Nasir, (M) Administration Office, Xinjiang Normal University.
- 218. Rena Mamut, (M) Library, Xinjiang Normal University.
- 219. Umit, (M) Affiliated High School of Xinjiang Normal University.
- 220. Rizwangul, (F), Affiliated High School of Xinjiang Normal University.
- 221. Eysa Qadir (M) professor, Xinjiang Agriculture University.
- 222. Ababekri Ablet, (M) president of Hotan Teachers College.
- 223. Memetrishat Zunun, (M) Xinjiang Huan Tourism Co. Ltd
- 224. Cheyret Eysa, (M) Kashgar 10# High School, publisher.

225. Dawut Obulqasim, (M) Koknur Biotechnology Co. Ltd.
226. Buhelchem Tursun, (F) former official of Urumqi Import and Export Department.
227. Telet Qadiri, (M) Uyghur textbook editor for grade 8, Xinjiang Education Press.
228. Hamutjan Hekim (M), Uyghur textbook editor for Grade 8, Xinjiang Education Press.
229. Shirmuhemmet Jarup, (M) Uyghur textbook editor, Xinjiang Education Press.
230. Perhat Kazim, (M) Uyghur textbook editor, Uyghur textbook editor.
231. Eysajan Turdi Achchiq, (M) Uyghur textbook editor for Grade 8.
232. Muqeddes Mirza, (F) Uyghur textbook editor for Grade 8.
233. Enwer Omer, (M) Uyghur textbook editor for Grade 8.
234. Hebibulla Eli, (M) Uyghur textbook editor for Grade 8.
235. Adiljan Ayit, (M) Uyghur Textbook printer, XUAR Education Press, Note: Adiljan Ayit was arrested because of a Uyghur textbook issue.
236. Abdurehim Osman, (M) Kashgar CCP local branch vice chairman of religious and ethnic affairs.
237. Shemsidin, (M) physician, XUAR Number 2 Hospital.
238. Zamanidin Pakzat, (M) poet, instructor, Preschool Teachers College.
239. Gulchihre Chongelem Eziz, (F) writer. Note: released 2020.
240. Ablikim Kelkun, (M) comedian, XUAR Theater.
241. Hebibulla Tohti, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute, PhD.
242. Adil Hajim, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
243. Yusupjan Zeynidin, (M) former professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
244. Muhemmet Abdulla, (M) former professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
245. Abduqahar Damolla, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
246. Ilyas Qarihaji, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute, PhD.

247. Shahabidin Hajim, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
248. Abduqahar Damolla, (M) professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
249. Abdusemi Damolla, (M) instructor, Artuch Islamic School.
250. Abliz Qarihaji (Arqan), (M) writer, religious scholar.
251. Abduhaliq Damolla, (M) instructor, Aqsu Islamic School.
252. Azat Eziz, (M) professor, former principal, Kashgar University.
253. Gulzar Ghenni, (F) Kashgar University.
254. Abduqeyum Semet, (M) physician, head of Kashgar No. 2 People's Hospital, arrested 2018.
255. Dilshat Alim, (M) physician, XUAR Number 2 People's Hospital.
256. Mirzat Osman< (M) 32 years old. Bachelor of Xinjiang Agricultural University, studied in Italy, missing since 2017.
257. Yasinjan Tohti, (M) pharmacist, Kashgar Uyghur Medicine Hospital.
258. Buwejer Memeteli, (M) teacher, Kashgar Number 10 Primary School.
259. Adil Eliyof, (M) retired accounted from People's Bank Kashgar Branch. Note: Adil Eliyof is released in March 2019.
260. Erkinjan Abdukerim, (M) primary school teacher in Awat Township Kashgar, died after release from reeducation camp on September 30th, 2018.
261. Nurmemet Tohti, (M) 32 years old, Xinjiang ELQUWET Co. Ltd.
262. Kamalidin, (M) professor, Xinjiang Financial & Economy University PhD.
263. Alishir Qurban, (M) associate professor, Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Science Academy. Note: Elshir Qurban was released in November 2019.
264. Huseyinjan Esqer, (M) researcher, Language Committee of XUAR. Note: released 2020.
265. Erkizat Barat, (M) writer, website editor, activist, graduated Zhongnan Financial University, Poskam, Xinjing (aka East Turkestan).

266. Hesengan Abdulla, (M) Researcher, Ili institute of Agricultural study, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, detained April 2017.
267. Hisamidin Eziz, (M) Poet, Xinjiang Representative Office in Beijing, detained in June 2018.
268. Abdulkahar Tursun, (M) Arcelik Electronic engineer, graduated Middle East Technology University, detained 2017.
269. Turghun Asim, (M) 45 years old, water engineer, Kashgar city Water Administration Department, detained in concentration in 2018.
270. Memtili Wahap, (M) 40 years old, Kashgar city Water Administration department.
271. Nurmemet Niyaz (M) 30 years old, Kashgar city Water Administration department.
272. Ekber Emet, (M) 37 years old, Kashgar city Water Administration Department.
273. Abdughopur Tursun, (M) 54 years old, Kashgar city Water Administration Department.
274. Sabirjan Hamut, (M) 48 years old, Kashgar city Water Administration Department.
275. Memetjan Rozi, (M) born in 1979, Graphic Designer & Film Editor, detained September 5th, 2017.
276. Kamal Abliz, (M) born in 1979, film maker and producer; he directed "There Is No Way For These Kids," detained June 9th 2017, Dolan Co. Ltd.
277. Semi Kirem, (M) Babahan Food & Logistics Company, detained in Midong Detention Center since August 15<sup>th</sup>.
278. Tahir Qasim, (M) writer, poet, professor, Aqsu Educational Institute.
279. Abdusalam Jalalidin, (M) professor, PhD, born in 1962 Ghulja, Xinjiang University.
280. Hemdulla Abdurahman, (M) Linguist, born in Pichan 1957, Languages Committee of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
281. Nizamidin Niyaz, (M) PhD, Lecturer of Xinjiang Normal University, sentenced for 15 years for participating in problematic textbook.
282. Tursunjan Behti, (M) PhD, Linguist, born in 1985, lecturer of Xinjiang Financial and Economics University.

283. Rahmanjan Awut Ozhal, (M) Poet, Singer, Song writer, XUAR Theater.

Note: Rahmanjan Awut Ozhal, released in 2019.

284. Eysabeg Mamut, (M) well-known folksinger, he was sentenced to 10 years, accused of illegal religious activity.<sup>[13]</sup> Note: Eysabeg Mamut released at end of 2019.

285. Waris Ababekri, (M) one of the former leaders of the 1988 Uyghur students' movement, writer, film producer, Xinjiang Dolan Co. Ltd, he died in 2020.

286. Osman Kerem, (M) born in 1961, former teacher of Urumqi #23 Middle School.

287. Kurban Haji, (M) 61 years old (born on March 1st, 1958 Artush). He has taught in high schools for 35 years, Artuch #4 High School. Note: Kurban Aji was released in June 2019.

288. Abduhelil Ela, (M) Surgeon, Tuberculosis Hospital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, detained in January 2018.

289. Zohre Ela, (F) Technician, Karamay Petroleum Company which cooperated with Hong Kong, detained in January 2018.

290. Juret Memet, (M) teacher, vice president of Regional Educational Department of Karamay.

291. Rishat, (M) teacher, #4 Primary School in Karamay.

292. Adil Yaqup, (M) poet, Vice Chief of #3 Detention Center, detained March 2018; he was released in 2019.<sup>[14]</sup> according to recent information, Adil was detained again in March 2020. Note: Adil Yaqup, poet and head of the #3 detention center was released in the first week of April; he was re-arrested in March 2020.

293. Memtimin Hoshur, (M) Writer, Former Head of XUAR Writers Association.

294. Ehtem Omer, (M) Writer, employee of state owned XUAR Filmmaking company, sentenced to 20 years.

295. Reyhangul, (F) Uyghur Medicine Hospital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in Urumqi city.

296. Juret Qurban, (M) born in 1986, Xinjiang Zamzambolaq International Trade Co. Ltd, detained in October 2017.

297. Jumaji Juma, (M) Teacher, Qulanchi Primary School, Azaq Township, Artuch, detained and sentenced to 7 years for sending a gift to Turkey.
298. Marat Isaqow, (M) born in 1982, Urumqi, Teacher, Urumqi #14 High School, studied in Kazan, Tatarstan Federal Republic, Tatar.
299. Sewirdin Imam, (M) Host, Actor, arrested in January 2019; He is in Tie Chang Gou, Michuan. Note: released in 2020.
300. Semi Kirem, (M) arrested on August 15th, 2018, Xinjiang BABAHAN Food Company.
301. Abduqeyum Imin, (M) actor, editor, Xinjiang TV, (State owned Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regional Propaganda Organization).
302. Hezereteli Memettyrsun, (M) Singer, public figure. Note: released at end of 2019.
303. Bupatem, (F) secretary of Hotan county level court.
304. Abdurahman, (M) Hotan county local branch of CCP Commission for Discipline Inspection.
305. Husenjan, (M) Musician, music teacher Hotan city #2 Primary School.
306. Arapat Erkin, (M) student, Kocaeli University, kept missing since 2017 went back to China.
307. Mirzat Osman, (M) student, studied in Milan; Kept missing since October 2017, then went back to China.
308. Omerjan, (M) architect, Uyghur style architecture designer, entrepreneur, public figure.
309. Yasin Kerim (M), Calligrapher, awarded several international Calligraphy competitions, Yengi Eriq township, Hotan.  
<https://instagram.com/uycalligrapher?igshid=1xoek3v9lwm0x>
310. Niyaz Kerim Sherqi, (M) Calligrapher, topographer, toponymist, professor of former Xinjiang University of Industry
311. Abdureshit Eli, (M) Pen name (tundiki adem), poet, editor of Yengi Qashteshi (seasonal literature magazine).



312. Abdukerim Yaqup, (M) Public figure, the people's government of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Beijing Office
313. Ehet Sayit, (M) Public Figure, County Mayor of Yarkent, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
314. Abdugheni Jume, (M) Public Figure, County Mayor of Merkit, XUAR
315. Ghali Rahman, (M) Public Figure, County Mayor of Peyzawat, XUAR
316. Memettrusun, (M) Public Figure, Kashagr Prefectural Foreign affair Office .
317. Gholamjan Ghopur, (M) English teacher, the founder of Tewpiq Language and Technology Training School.
318. Abdumijit Abduqadir, (M) Instructor, Xinjiang Uyghur Medicine College, PhD candidate of Chinese Science Academy Xinjiang Branch.
319. Enwer Niyaz, (M) Teacher, Principal of Toqsun County #1 High School, Head of Toqsun County Education Department.
320. Shohret, (M) Instructor, Xinjiang Normal University, TsingHua University PhD Candidate.
321. Qelbinur Hamut, (F) Teacher, Number 19 Primary School, one of the editors of Uyghur textbook, retired in 2015, arrested in 2017.
322. Abdurehim Ablethan, (M) writer, film maker, Jigde Qduq Village, Qomul.
323. Turkizat Gheyret, (M) Student Activist, Xinjiang Finance and Economics University.
324. Musajan Imir, (M) Entrepreneur, Xinjiang Qaraqum International Trade Company.
325. Ghenni Semet, (M) Poet, self-employed Uyghur bookstore owner.
326. Gulnisa Imin, (F) Poet, local social activist. Well-known female poet, her poetry has been translated into Japanese and published in Japan.
327. Abliz Arqan, (M) Blogger and Islamic Scholar. Small business owner in Korla city.
328. Abduqeyum Tohtaji, (M) one of the editors of a banned Uyghur textbook.
329. Abduweli Muqiyit, (M) Uyghur cultural activist. Born in Ghulja in 1945. Sentenced to 17 years in 2019. Now in jail in Heilongjiang Province.

330. Muhter Mamut Muhemmidi (M) independent scholar, publisher, Uyghur Bookstore owner in Qarghiliq County Kashgar.
331. Ablet Ababekri, (M) Professor, President of Hotan Teachers College.
332. Muhter Emet, (M) Poet, vice chief Konisheher County CCP local branch, detained 2017 September.
333. Abduhelil Tohti, (M) athlete, wrestling master, teacher, Konisheher No. 1 High School, detained in April 2017.
334. Ehmet Turghun, (M) teacher, arrested in September 2017, one of the Uyghur textbook related teachers. Urumqi #22 primary school.
335. Reyhangul Hashim, (F) teacher arrested in September 2017, one of the detainees related to the Uyghur text book issue, Urumqi Qarlayelisi primary school.
336. Ekber Awut, (M) teacher, athlete, arrested in September 2018, died in the detention center in Urumqi October 2019, Urumqi #22 primary school.
337. Melike Dawut, (F) teacher, researcher, detained in April 2017, one of the detainees related to the Uyghur textbook issue, Urumqi educational department, research office.
338. Bahargul Hebibil, (F) IT engineer, arrested in June 2017, sentenced to 5 years in prison in November 2019, Urumqi branch of Chinese Railway Communication Company.
339. Mihray Hebibil, (F) Policewoman in Turpan city, arrested in 2018, sentenced to 3 years on November 6, 2019.
340. Alim Hebibil, (M) prison guard in Turpan city, arrested in 2018, sentenced to 3 years in November 2019.
341. Yasin Imin, (M) IT engineer, professor in Xinjiang University, Department of Information Technology, researcher in Bureau of Information Technology of Xinjiang Ethnic Languages Work Committee, selected as distinguished youth by Uyghur Autonomous Regional Party Branch and government in 2015. He was arrested in 2018.
342. Alim Hasani, (M) Linguist, interpreter, researcher at Bureau of Information Technology of Xinjiang Ethnic Languages Work Committee, arrested August 2018.
343. Mehmud Eli Atilla, (M) researcher, teacher arrested in 2017, Awat #3 High School Aqsu Prefecture, reason of imprisonment related to the Uyghur text book issue.

344. Dilnur Mesum, (F) Principal of Hotan Langru secondary school, teaching Chinese, arrested in 2018, sentenced to 15 years, reason for imprisonment related to a WeChat message which was sent in 2013 about halal food.

345. Nasirhaji, (M) The senior staff of the Business Department of Agricultural Bank Shufu County Subbranch; arrested in May 2017; reason for imprisonment related to helping poor and needy families by donations collected from Meshrep.

346. Tahir Mesum, (M) Deputy Director of Hotan Education Bureau in Hotan Xinjiang, arrested in 2018, sentenced to 10 years, accused of a racial discrimination crime, reason for imprisonment related to a WeChat message which he received in 2013 about halal food.

347. Abliz Orhun, (M) Former editor in chief of Xinjiang Difang Zhi (Xinjiang regional historiography), editor of Minzu Publishing House, Xinjiang, China, arrested in February 2018.

348. Obulqasim Abdurehim, (M) IT technician at Kashgar - China Telecom since 1995, arrested in May 2017, reason for imprisonment related to helping poor and needy families by donations collected from Meshrep.

349. Abliz Tohtihaji, (M) the Director of Kashgar Prefectural Transport Administration Bureau since 2012. arrested in May 2017, reason for imprisonment related to helping poor and needy families by donations collected from Meshrep gathering.

350. Ishak, (M) The Principal of Changji state No. 3 Secondary School, C arrested in Xinjiang in 2018

351. Reyhangul, (F) Teacher of Changji state No. 3 secondary school, Xinjiang teaching literature she also was arrested.

352. Juret Memtimin, (M) a Uyghur retired government official of the People's Republic of China, former professor of Minzu University, and former governor of Hotan prefecture. There was no news from him after being called for interrogation in early December 2019.

353. Ilham Rozi, (M) Poet, Deputy Head of Publicity Department of Aksu Prefecture Committee. He was arrested in April 2019 without any reason.

354. Behtiyar Ilham, (M) Uyghur computer engineer and manager of Qarluk IT company. He was arrested in November 2019 without any reason.

355. Ablajan Memet, (M) Teacher, historian, Peyzawat #1 High School, Kashgar, arrested in 2016. Graduate, History Department, Xinjiang University
356. Kamil Hesent, (M) Teacher, poet, Qizilboyi High School of Peyzawat County, Kashgar. He was arrested in 2015, because of poetry he published in 2003 in Kashgar.
357. Memetsalim Sabir, (M) Teacher, poet, Peyzawat #1 High School, Kashgar. He was arrested in 2015, because of poetry he published in 2003 in Kashgar,
358. Alim Yawa, (M) Poet, teacher, Gulluk High School of Peyzawat County Kashgar. He was arrested in 2015, because of poetry he published in 2003 in Kashgar.
359. Gulnisa Imin, (F) Poet, teacher, Chira #1 High School. She was arrested in 2017, because of her poetry published in Japan.
360. Muhemmet Emet Chopani, (M) Writer, poet, teacher, Chopan High School of Karghaliq County Kashgar. He was arrested in 2017, because of his poetry book Jennet Yoli, published in Turkey in 2013.
361. Osmanjan Ehet (M), Musician, Qarluq High Tech Company, Urumqi. He was born in 1981 in Shahyar County. He was arrested in October 2017.
362. Tursun Turghun, (M) a teacher in Tamtoghraq county, born in Aksu, went to high school and university in inner China (Chinese provinces). He was arrested on the 2nd of July 2017. He is suspected of downloading and spreading information related to terrorism.
363. Rozi Toxti, (m) a literature teacher at Awat County 3rd Middle School; he was arrested on the 2nd of July 2017. He was accused of robbery.
364. Nurmetmet Hamut, (M) graduated from college in Shanghai, programmer at Lenovo Computer Company. He was arrested on October 13, 2017. He was released in October 2019 and was appointed as a teacher at the camp where he was previously interned.
365. Memet Perhat, (M) graduated from Chongqing University, later became a police officer. He was arrested on October 23, 2017.
366. Emet Yasin, (M): a doctor at Tamtoghraq County Hospital, arrested on June 8, 2017, and accused of using Kuaiya App.
367. Renagul Memet, (f) an employee of the county government of Awat, was arrested on July 10, 2017, and accused of using VPN.

368. Nurmemet Rozi, (m) the mayor of Kashgar, was arrested in 2019 and accused of hypocrisy (two-faced).

369. Ehet Sayit, (m) the district head of Yarkant (Yeken) county, was arrested in 2018 and accused of hypocritical behavior.

370. Ehet Sulayman, (M) Pedagogue, the chair of Qumul City Tengritagh county education district, was arrested in March 2017, graduated from Xinjiang Normal University.

371. Ehet Sulayman, (M) government official, vice chairman of Qomul city Tengritagh county, graduated from Xinjiang University (former Maarif Institut), was arrested in March 2017.

372. Jelil Osman, (M) former vice chairman of Qomul city municipality, chairman of Qomul city Sheherichi county government, date and place of detention is unknown.

373. Muhemmet Osman, (M) graduated from Xi'an Medical University, medical specialist at Qomul Prefecture People's Hospital, detained in 2017 and sentenced to 71 years.

374. Abliz Tohtihaji, (M) Director of Kashgar Prefectural Transport Administration Bureau since 2012, detained in May 2017.

375. Obulqasim Abdurehim, (M) He was working as an IT technician at Kashgar - China Telecom since 1995, detained in June 2017.

376. Ahat Ebrahim, (M) businessman, founder and director of the Tabassum Conventional Centers in Korla city, detained in May 2017, died mysteriously in December 2019 in one of the concentration camps in Korla.

377. Adiljan Abdurehim, (M) Head of Saybagh Educational department, educated in Moscow in 1990s.

378. Abdurahman, (M) Vice head of public security bureau Shufu county XUATR, was arrested in 2017, accused of double faced.

379. Abduqahar Yusup, (M) Independent researcher, studied at Nanjing University from 2007-2011. English interpreter Qarluq IT Company, arrested in 2017.

380. Nebi Yusup, (M) English Interpreter, graphic designer, Qarluq Company, arrested in 2017.

381. Abdurehim Ablethan, (M) Independent researcher, writer, blogger, filmmaker, administrator of Bagdax Fourum, arrested in 2017, Born in Qomul.
382. Abduqeyum Yasin, (M) Medical researcher, physician, Kashgar Prefectural People's Hospital, student in Singapore, worked for Finland FIDA international.
283. Sayithaji Qasim, (M) surgeon, researcher, Kashgar No. 2 People's Hospital.
284. Nurmemet Muhter, (M) Master student, Xinjiang University, arrested before his graduation in April 2017.
285. Erpan Memet, (M) English teacher, graduated from Xinjiang Medical University, arrested April 2017.
386. Memettursun Memet, (M) photographer, arrested in 2017.
387. Muhtar Nurmammed, (M) physician, private hospital owner, Kashgar, arrested in June 2017.
388. Kaiser Rahman, (M) English teacher, Xinjiang University, arrested in April 2017.
389. Ahmatjan, (M) English Teacher, Nu Skin sales representative, Xinjiang University,
390. Rozi, (M) professor, architecture, School of Construction and Engineering of Xinjiang University, arrested February 2018.
391. Reyhangul, imam (REYIHANGU YIMAMU) (F) 33 years old. History teacher of Kezilesu Autonomous Prefecture No. 1 High School. She was arrested in October of 2017 and sentenced to 12 years in prison in March of 2018 because she received a book related to how to educate children from Dr. Erkin Siddiq by email during her Master studies at Xinjiang University 8-9 years ago.
392. Obul Tursun, (M) Teacher, Karghiliq county #1 High School, arrested in 2017, sentenced to jail.
393. Mutellip Memet, (M) physician, Urumqi Bugda Hospital, graduated Shanghai Medical University, from Aksu city.
394. Abdurahman Barat, (M) physician, Hotan Alqelib Hospital, graduated Shanghai Medical University, arrested 2018, sentenced to ten years in 2019
395. Yaqup Haji (M) surgeon, Kashgar Nurluk Hospital, graduated Xinjiang Medical Hospital.

396. Abdumejit Haji, (M) Teacher, Kashgar Number 7 High School, arrested February 2020, sentenced to 6 years in 2020.
397. Perhat Ilyas, (M) writer, Xinjiang Education Press
398. Memeteli Helim, (M) Writer, Bortala Federation of Literary and Art Circles
399. Behtiyar, (M) Writer, Bortala Federation of Literary and Art Circles
400. Dolqun Rozi, (M) writer, researcher, Ili People's Political Consultative Conference, editor of "Ili Historical Materials"
401. Eset Abdurishit, (M) Writer, Editor in Chief, "Ili River"
402. Muqarip Yehya, (M), Writer, Aksu Prefectural Education Department .
403. Mutellip Hursendi, (M), Writer, poet, instructor, Aksu Teachers' School.
404. Batur Rehmitulla, (M), writer, editor in chief, Aksu Daily.
405. Semet Abdurahman, (M), writer, editor in chief, Komul Literature.
406. Abliz Omer Haji, (M), Poet, writer, editor, Komul Daily.
407. Ehmet Hemdul, (M), Poet, writer, editor Komul Literature.
408. Uchqun Rahman, (M), Writer, Editor, Komul Literature.
409. Metsilim Metqasim, (M), Writer, editor of literature magazine Hotan New Jade Literature, general secretary of Hotan Trade Union.
410. Ekber Niyaz Pettari, (M), Poet, Writer, former editor literature magazine "Turpan", persecuted and appointed to the workers union of Turpan Prefecture.
411. Enwer Hoshur, (M) Professor, Hotan Teacher's Collage, literature critic, writer.
412. Eziz Atawulla Sartekin, (M) publisher, professor, Xinjiang Islamic Institute.
413. Tursun Mehmet, (M) writer, official Cherchen County Culture Department.
414. Muhter Supurge, (M) writer, professor, Hotan Teacher's Collage.
415. Omerjan Osman Suzuk, (M) writer, historian, Yakkent Radio and TV department.
416. Gheyret, (M) Teacher, Ghulja No.2 High school, founder of Zordun Sabir Library.

417. Yusup Jan, (M) poet, writer, Awat County Education Department.
418. Jume Rejep (M) General secretary of CCP branch of quality inspection department in Bugur County.
419. Omerjan, (M) teacher, principal of Ayhan high school in Ghulja city.
420. Abdurishit Musajan, (M) writer, Kiriye Writers' Association, Kiriye Hotan..
421. Metseydi Metqasim, (M) writer, editor of Tarim monthly literature magazine
423. Erkin Awut, (M) head of Yarkent culture department, architect of Yarkent palace.
424. Abdusemet, (M) photographer, vice head of Yarkent culture department.
424. Ehmet Kebir, (M) writer, head of Aksu No.1 high school.
425. Ehet Dawut, (M) writer, poet, Uyghur Autonomous Regional Religious Affairs Department.
426. Mesumjan Memur, (M) writer, vice head of Ili Kazakh autonomous prefecture religious affairs department.
427. Edhem Ibrahim, (M) writer, poet, tax officer, Qaynuq township, Ghulja city.
428. Abdughopur, (M) historian, chairman of Yengisheher Political Consultant Conference, Kashgar Prefecture.
429. Abduqadir, (M), public figure, former head of Hotan Culture Department.
430. Ghalip Barat Erk, (M), Historian, Writer, Post and Telegraph Department Charqiliq county, Bayngholin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture.
431. Yusupjan Yasin, (M) Historian, writer, Urumqi No.14 High School.
432. Yasin, (M) musician, Hotan Yengi Qashteshi Music and Opera theater, sentenced 16 years in 2019.
433. Rushengul, (F) dancer, Hotan Yengi Qashteshi Music and Opera theater, sentenced 20 years.
434. Gulnar, (F) dancer, Hotan Yengi Qashteshi Music and Opera theater, sentenced 20 years in 2019.



435. Tursun Ebey, (M) language activist, philanthropist, Founder of Yiltiz Uyghur Mother language foundation, Former director of Cherchen Xinhua bookstore, Cherchen county, arrested 2017.

436. Omer Dawut, (M) Professor, Chinese Language Department, Xinjiang University, visiting scholar of University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was sentenced to 15 years.

437. Yalqun Abdurahman, (M) Uyghur Mother language teacher, head of first Modern Uyghur school set up in Iksaq Atush, in 1885. He got arrested at school and sentenced to 14 years.

#### Notes

1. This list is composed of Uyghur intellectuals whose imprisonment has been confirmed by the Uyghur Diaspora. The imprisonment of some individuals on the list has been investigated by Radio Free Asia; the imprisonment of other intellectuals listed here has been confirmed by other reliable sources in China and some relatives of detainees in the Diaspora.

2. While considerable care has been taken in compiling and checking the list, obstacles have nonetheless been considerable, given the information blockade imposed on Xinjiang (Eastern Turkistan) by the Chinese government. As a result, there may be errors in the list. We ask readers' help in correcting any such issues, compiling further information on the individuals listed herein, and adding other detained intellectuals to the list.

3. It is clear that the number of detained intellectuals greatly exceeds the number listed here. This list—and other lists of detained individuals will be continually revised and expanded.

4. On January 9th, the order will be reorganized; after this time, while the order will be the same, if I add some individuals they will appear under the heading "Other intellectuals."

(Last updated by Abduweli Ayup on April 5, 2022) If you need more information, resumes, testimonies, please feel free to contact Abduweli Ayup, [yanmaymiz@gmail.com](mailto:yanmaymiz@gmail.com)



**SEPARATED  
FROM THEIR FAMILIES,  
HIDDEN FROM THE WORLD**

CHINA'S VAST SYSTEM OF COLONIAL  
BOARDING SCHOOLS INSIDE TIBET

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**SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES,  
HIDDEN FROM THE WORLD**

China's Vast System of Colonial Boarding  
Schools Inside Tibet

December 2021



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Tibet Action Institute combines the power of digital communication with strategic nonviolent action to advance the Tibetan freedom movement. We bring together expert campaigners, strategists, and technologists to develop and implement visionary strategies and innovative training, education, and technology programs, equipping Tibetans with the tools and knowledge to achieve human rights and freedom in Tibet.

For more information please visit: <https://tibetaction.net>

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## SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS



In 2020 in [name removed] county, the authorities converted [the village] schools to nursery schools and prohibited children from studying in their own village. The families are forced to send their children to schools in cities now.  
– Parent in eastern Tibet



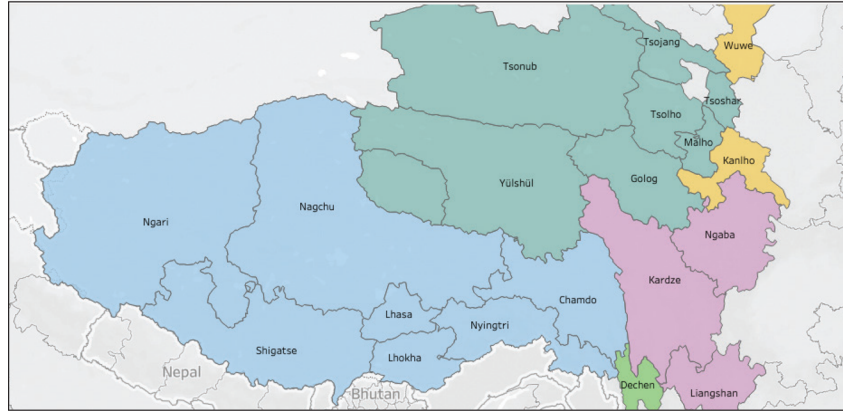
In [my area] it is mandatory to send children aged four and above to boarding schools...Teachers only speak in Mandarin and conduct all school curriculum in Mandarin, including nursery rhymes and bedtime stories. When they join primary school at age seven, hardly any of them can speak Tibetan.  
– Teacher in eastern Tibet






The Chinese government has established a vast network of colonial boarding schools in Tibet where students live separated from their families and are subjected to highly politicized education, primarily in Chinese. Touted by the Chinese government as a means of providing education to a sparse and far-flung population, the schools are the cornerstone of an assimilationist agenda advanced by Chinese President Xi Jinping himself, intended to preempt threats to Chinese Communist Party control by eliminating ethnic differences. The impact of the colonial boarding school experience on Tibetan children and their families – including psychological and emotional trauma – and the implications for whole generations of Tibetans and the long-term survival of Tibetan identity are grave. It is imperative that the United Nations and concerned governments urgently call on China to halt its implementation of this system in Tibet.

This report finds that:

- Tibet's education system has become primarily residential; official data shows that approximately 800,000 Tibetan children aged six to 18 – 78% of Tibetan students – are living in colonial boarding schools;
- Tibetan parents are compelled to send their children to boarding schools due to a lack of alternatives and are unable to advocate for other options in Tibet's repressive environment. Individual accounts show that intimidation and threats are used to coerce reluctant parents to send their children to such schools;
- Students are at risk of losing their mother tongue and connection to their cultural identity because:
  - 1) classes are primarily taught in Chinese;
  - 2) they live apart from their families and communities and are, therefore, unable to practice their religion or access the most authentic expressions of Tibetan culture and traditions; and
  - 3) they are subjected to a highly politicized curriculum intended to make them identify as Chinese;
- China's boarding school policy is discriminatory in that it targets Tibetans and other "ethnic minorities," while the rate of Chinese students in boarding schools is dramatically lower, even in rural areas;
- Researchers have shown Tibetan boarding school students to be experiencing great emotional and psychological distress, including extreme feelings of loneliness and isolation, as a result of being separated from their families, communities, and culture; and
- China's colonial boarding school system in Tibet violates multiple international human rights treaties, including those to which China is a party, as well as China's own domestic laws.

## MAP OF TIBET IN PREFECTURES



	Tibet Autonomous Region
	Sichuan
	Yunnan
	Qinghai
	Gansu

## INTRODUCTION

Changes to education policies in Tibet over the last 10-15 years, combined with Chinese President Xi Jinping's frontal assault on Tibetan culture, language, religion, and identity, have resulted in a vast system of colonial boarding schools in Tibet, which shares marked similarities with other colonial schooling systems. Conservative estimates based on official figures suggest that at least 800,000 Tibetan children are now housed in these state-run institutions.<sup>1</sup> This number represents approximately 78% of Tibetan students between the ages of six and 18 and does not include an unknown number of four- and five-year-olds who are also living in boarding schools.<sup>2</sup>

The colonial boarding school system in Tibet is a core element of the Chinese Communist Party's systematic effort to co-opt, undermine, and ultimately eliminate Tibetan identity in an attempt to neutralize Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. Thirteen years after Tibetans participated in a nationwide uprising for rights and freedom, even the previous semblance of regional autonomy and ethnic accommodation toward Tibetans and other minority groups is disappearing. While officials still claim that Tibetan identity is protected, an explicit policy of Sinicization is altering fundamental aspects of Tibetan life – language,<sup>3</sup> livelihood,<sup>4</sup> and religion.<sup>5</sup> (Sinicization refers to a focused effort by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to bring non-Chinese societies into conformity with Chinese culture, language, and societal norms, as well as to enact ethnic identity acculturation, policies of assimilation, or more direct policies of cultural imperialism.) This approach seeks to achieve long-term political control through cultural uniformity, supplanting the identities and distinct cultures of Tibetans, Uyghurs, and other groups under CCP rule with – in Xi's words – “a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation” in order to ensure the “enduring stability of the Party and the country.”<sup>6</sup>

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1 See our research detailed on page 24 for sources and student locations.

2 Source 1, Online Commenter 1, Appendix 1.

3 For example, see Human Rights Watch, “China's ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” 2020, available at: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/tibet0320\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/tibet0320_web_0.pdf) (accessed November 21, 2021).

4 For example, see Human Rights Watch, “‘They Say We Should Be Grateful,’ Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China,” June 2013, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> (accessed November 23, 2021).

5 This is extensively documented. Recent examples include Xi Jinping's statement that “Tibetan Buddhism should be guided in adapting to the socialist society and should be developed in the Chinese context,” from CGTN, “China sets policy directions for building a modern socialist Tibet,” August 30, 2020, available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-29/Xi-addresses-seventh-Tibet-work-forum-in-Beijing--TIGiGamKcM/index.html> (accessed July 6, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913091617/https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-29/Xi-addresses-seventh-Tibet-work-forum-in-Beijing--TIGiGamKcM/index.html> and International Campaign for Tibet, “New measures tighten control over religious clergy, accelerate CCP's Sinicization policy,” February 25, 2021, available at: <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.167/4vo.170.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/02252021-Analysis.pdf> (accessed July 6, 2021).

6 Xinhua, “Xi Focus: Xi stresses high-quality development of Party's work on ethnic affairs,” August 28, 2021, available at: [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c\\_1310154568.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c_1310154568.htm) (accessed November 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211021193455/http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c\\_1310154568.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20211021193455/http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c_1310154568.htm).





Political indoctrination is a priority, to “unremittingly... guide students of all ethnic groups to...establish a correct view of the country, nation, religion, history, and culture.”

– China’s State Council



Every day for three years, I never felt happy starting a day or going to class...my only thought was, “When I get to go back home.”

– Former Boarding School Student

Children in colonial boarding schools<sup>7</sup> live apart from their families and communities, separated – often at a young age – from the language, religion, and traditions that are part of home life. For most students, Chinese is the primary teaching language. Students are allowed access to only a CCP-approved version of Tibetan culture, often revolving around song and dance.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, political indoctrination is a priority, to “unremittingly... guide students of all ethnic groups to...establish a correct view of the country, nation, religion, history, and culture.”<sup>9</sup> Loneliness and homesickness are extreme; a former boarding student describes, “Every day for three years, I never felt happy starting a day or going to class...my only thought was, “When I get to go back home.”<sup>10</sup> The colonial boarding school experience has the potential to inflict devastating psychological and social harm on entire generations of Tibetan children and parents, including the permanent alienation of Tibetans from their language, culture, religion, and traditions.

Parents are compelled to send their children to these schools by several interlinked factors. China’s settler colonial project in Tibet has led to the transformation of Tibetans’ livelihoods, increased urbanization, growing dependence on a cash economy, dominance of Chinese language in many arenas, and structural racism that disadvantages Tibetans seeking jobs or accessing services. In this context, Tibetan parents view education as a necessity for equipping their children to survive in a rapidly changing world. Simultaneously, the Chinese state has actively eliminated rural village schools, even at the elementary level, and replaced them with centralized boarding schools, while also forcing monastery schools and other Tibetan-run schools to close. Finally, increasing criminalization of Tibetan identity, ever-present surveillance both on- and offline, and lack of access to justice mean that Tibetans are unable to advocate for alternatives to the boarding school system. First-hand accounts detailed in this report show that those who resist sending their children away face threats, fines, and other punitive measures. Together, these factors create a fundamentally coercive environment in which Tibetan parents are left with no choice but to send their children to boarding schools.

There is strong evidence that the colonial boarding school system for Tibetans is designed to achieve the same end as the residential school systems in Canada and the United States, and the state-run training schools and institutions for the “Stolen Generations” of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families in Australia. Colonial boarding schools and other similar state- and missionary-run institutions in these countries were intended to erase the

7 We are using the term “colonial boarding schools” to describe what is commonly referred to in Tibetan as ཇམ་ཁྱེད་ཁྱེད་ (chardoe) or ཁྱེད་ཁྱེད་ (tenlop) and in Chinese as 寄宿制学校 (jìsùzhì xuéxiào).

8 Seen for example in a CGTN propaganda piece, “A Day in the Life of a Tibetan High Schooler,” (Video, minute 1:27), available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514e79557a4e33457a6333566d54/index.html> (accessed June 20, 2021).

9 State Council, “Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education,” National Document [2015] 46, issued August 11, 2015, section 19, available at: [www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-08/17/content\\_10097.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-08/17/content_10097.htm) (accessed November 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210629235302/http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-08/17/content\\_10097.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20210629235302/http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-08/17/content_10097.htm).

10 Testimony 5, see Appendix 3.

identities of First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native American, and other Indigenous Peoples and force them to adopt the colonizers' culture and religion. Key features of these systems included removing children from their families and communities, forcing them to abandon their mother tongues, and breaking their connections to cultural identity and traditions – all policies designed, in the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, to “assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples.”<sup>11</sup>

Three critical factors that distinguish these colonial school systems from other boarding school systems:

1) attendance is not a free choice (whether due to requirements enforced by authorities or lack of alternatives for education);

2) the school experience is intended to influence or even erase students' cultural identity and indoctrinate them with the beliefs (religious or ideological) of the colonial power or dominant group; and

3) students live apart from their parents, families, and communities.

The destructive elements of the Canadian, American, and Australian systems may or may not all be present in the Tibetan case. In particular, lack of access makes it nearly impossible to assess the prevalence of abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional) and neglect in Tibet's boarding schools today, all of which were devastatingly central to the experiences of children in Canada, the United States, and Australia. However, we see three critical factors that distinguish these colonial school systems from other boarding school systems:

1) attendance is not a free choice (whether due to requirements enforced by authorities or lack of alternatives for education);

2) the school experience is intended to influence or even erase students' cultural identity and indoctrinate them with the beliefs (religious or ideological) of the colonial power or dominant group; and

3) students live apart from their parents, families, and communities.

These factors are all present in China's state-run boarding school system in Tibet.

The colonial boarding school program is an insidious tool in the larger project of forcing Tibetans to adopt a homogenous, patriotic, Chinese identity in order to eliminate challenges to the Party or the state. While it differs in some ways from the residential school and “child removal” systems in Canada, the United States, and Australia, it contains many of the same hallmarks and similarly seeks to subjugate and control an entire population. In this way, it is also reminiscent of China's policies in East Turkistan (Chinese: Xinjiang) where the government separates children from their families through boarding schools, boarding preschools, and by incarcerating parents in Chinese-run re-education camps. The potential damage these actions will have on today's generation of young people, and on generations to come, is staggering. It demands urgent action from the United Nations, governments around the world, and from the Chinese government itself.

11 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,” p. 153. The Commission also described residential schools as a central element of “cultural genocide,” elaborating: “Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.” (p. 1)

## METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was constrained by the extreme control China maintains over information flow into and out of Tibet. Foreign researchers, including Tibetans based outside Tibet or China, are not permitted access to Tibet, except in rare instances. Online communication is monitored, and Tibetans face serious repercussions for discussing topics viewed by the government as sensitive, particularly with people based abroad.

Our report, therefore, relies on a combination of sources. First-hand accounts from inside Tibet give examples of how China's education policies affect the lived experience of Tibetans on the ground. These were provided to our researchers by Tibetans in exile who have close ties with contacts in Tibet. Identifying information for sources in Tibet has been withheld due to the extreme risk to their safety. We also gathered statements from Tibetans in exile with strong knowledge of developments inside Tibet and/or who attended colonial boarding school themselves. We reviewed related research by scholars within China as well as reports and articles by other academics and human rights organizations. Finally, we extrapolated the number of Tibetans enrolled in boarding school based on data we collected from the 2010 and 2020 censuses, national and provincial-level statistical yearbooks, government reports at the prefectural and county levels, academic papers, and media reports.

The Chinese government's statistical data are often viewed with skepticism – though this is particularly the case with economic data<sup>12</sup> – as it is not uncommon for provincial and prefectural authorities to inflate their numbers to meet targets or quotas. This is a shortcoming endemic to all studies that use Chinese administrative data. Regardless of this potential vulnerability, the statistics we provide help to illustrate the scale and scope of the current colonial boarding school system. As mentioned above, we have also sought to supplement the quantitative data with firsthand accounts and testimonials from Tibetans themselves, as well as those of scholars within China. Both the high number of Tibetan students reportedly enrolled in boarding schools and the increasing number of elementary-school-aged children attending are supported by Chinese policy documents, observations from Tibetans, and, for some locations, by Chinese state media. Additionally, because of the nature of Tibet's administration (discussed in the following paragraph), these numbers are drawn from many different sources and many different levels of government, and yet still show similar trends across almost all Tibetan areas.

"Tibet" is defined here as the three Tibetan provinces of Amdo, Kham, and Ü-Tsang. In the 1960s, the Chinese government split Tibet into new administrative divisions: the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and Counties within Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. (See map on page 2.) This significantly complicates efforts to study Tibetans as a group because population data are fragmented between many jurisdictions. When the Chinese government references Tibet, it is referring only to the TAR. According to the 2010 Chinese census (2020 census numbers for all Tibetan areas are not yet available), the total Tibetan population is 6.2 million, and the Tibetan population of the TAR is 2.7 million, or 44% of the total.

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12 For example, see Wallace, Jeremy L. "Juking the stats? Authoritarian information problems in China." *British Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 1 (2016): 11-29.

## HISTORY OF COLONIAL BOARDING SCHOOLS IN TIBET



literally, a military-style boot camp in how to be “Chinese” and how to conform to acceptable ways of acting, thinking and being.

– Ethnic Policy Scholar  
James Leibold

Under the People’s Republic of China, education policy in Tibet has gone through many changes and has varied by area. Boarding school has been seen as a viable model for decades because of Tibet’s small and geographically dispersed population.<sup>13</sup> While personal accounts of life in early Tibetan boarding schools indicate that they were deeply problematic, the system that has emerged in Tibet over the last ten years is far more destructive.

A prominent precursor to the current boarding school system for Tibetans was the Inland Schooling program (*neidi minzu ban* or *neidiban* in Chinese, referred to by some scholars as “dislocated ethnic schooling”). This project, which targets only the TAR, began in 1985 and has expanded in the last decade.<sup>14</sup> Its goals are transparently political: cutting students’ bonds with their home communities and instilling new norms around language, culture, and loyalty. Ethnic policy scholar James Leibold describes it as “literally, a military-style boot camp in how to be ‘Chinese’ and how to conform to acceptable ways of acting, thinking and being.”<sup>15</sup> Despite its assimilationist aims, it is seen as an elite program for which families compete to send their children.

Separate from the Inland Schooling program, boarding schools existed in Tibet in the 1980s and 1990s. Individual accounts suggest that students were undernourished, healthcare and hygiene were minimal, and bullying and abuse were commonplace.<sup>16</sup> In the 1980s, major changes in national and regional policies allowed for “minority areas to develop their own education programmes, including kinds of schools, curriculum content and the language of instruction.”<sup>17</sup> The TAR saw concerted, successful efforts to increase Tibetan-medium education<sup>18</sup> and such efforts continued through the 2000s outside the TAR.<sup>19</sup> However, local village schools were underfunded, with few resources for buildings, teaching materials, salaries, and localization of the school curriculum,<sup>20</sup> causing both the quality of education and enrollment rates to remain very low.<sup>21</sup>

13 Cao, Gazang. “Alienation of Tibetan adolescents in rural boarding schools.” *Frontiers of Education in China* 11, no. 4 (2016): 505.

14 Leibold, James. “Interior ethnic minority boarding schools: China’s bold and unpredictable educational experiment.” *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2019): 1.

15 Leibold, James, and Timothy A. Grose. “Cultural and political disciplining inside China’s dislocated minority schooling system.” *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2019): 2.

16 See personal testimonies in Appendix 3.

17 Catriona Bass, *Education in Tibet: Policy and practice since 1950* (London: Zed books, 1998), 50.

18 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 16.

19 Zenz, Adrian. “Beyond assimilation: The Tibetisation of Tibetan education in Qinghai.” *Inner Asia* 12, no. 2 (2010): 293–315.

20 Postiglione, Gerard A. “Dislocated education: The case of Tibet.” *Comparative Education Review* 53, no. 4 (2009): 489.

21 For example, see Fischer, Andrew Martin. “Educating for exclusion in western China: structural and institutional dimensions of conflict in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Tibet.” (2009): 17.

In 2001, China embarked on a “school consolidation policy” through which village schools would be closed and education would be concentrated in larger centers.<sup>22</sup> This was accompanied in 2004 by the Chinese Ministry of Education’s “Construction of Boarding Schools in Rural Areas” project. These projects were ostensibly intended to increase the quality of education received by students in rural areas, while reducing costs and overcoming transportation challenges. Tibetan researcher Huatse Gyal reports that 371,470 rural schools in China, or 81.3 percent, were closed between 2001 and 2010.<sup>23</sup>

The policies reached Tibet after several years. Triga county (Chinese: Guide) in Tsoilho (Chinese: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was a Qinghai pilot for the school consolidation project.<sup>24</sup> From 2008-2011, 87 elementary and secondary schools were merged into 11 boarding schools based in the township and county seats. Most villages previously had either an elementary school or a teaching post.<sup>25</sup> The number of elementary and secondary schools in the prefecture as a whole dropped from 372 to 66 in 2010.<sup>26</sup> One school with 2,749 students, all Tibetan, became the largest in Qinghai, “merging 18 schools and combining another 44 schools.”<sup>27</sup> According to sources for this report, the consolidation policy is still being implemented in Qinghai.<sup>28</sup>

In the TAR and Sichuan, it appears that the consolidation policy began taking effect in the last decade. In 2014, an “Education City” opened on the outskirts of Lhasa, intended to house 17 schools and their students. Human Rights Watch reports that “the compound, which also includes ‘an original village with Tibetan nationality characteristics left as it was,’ was expected to have a population of over 50,000.” Students from Lhasa reportedly board at the schools – despite having homes in the same city<sup>29</sup> – as do Tibetan students from parts of the TAR almost 900 miles away.<sup>30</sup>

Reports suggest the consolidation policy reached at least one area of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan in 2013.<sup>31</sup> It reached Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture by 2011; during her 2011 fieldwork, a Chinese

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22 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 76 and Ying, Yumnyi Ji. “‘To be included among people’: families’ perceptions of schooling and contingent negotiations in a rural Tibetan community in China.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* (2021): 2.

23 Gyal, Huatse. “‘I am concerned with the future of my children’: The Project Economy and Shifting Views of Education in a Tibetan Pastoral Community.” *Critical Asian Studies* 51.1 (2019): 25.

24 Ying, p. 2.

25 Ying, p. 6.

26 Cao, “Alienation of Tibetan adolescents in rural boarding schools,” p. 506.

27 Cao, “Alienation of Tibetan adolescents in rural boarding schools,” p. 506.

28 See Testimony 5 in Appendix 3 and Ying, p. 4.

29 Confidential conversation with a Tibetan in exile originally from Lhasa, May 2021; Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education Policy in Tibet,” p. 92.

30 CGTN, “Teaching in Tibet: China rolls out changes in education,” March 27, 2019, available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3367544f32494464776c5d636a4e6e2684a4856/index.html> (accessed June 22, 2021) and CGTN, “A day in the life of a Tibetan high schooler,” April 1, 2019, available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514c79557a4c33457a6335566d54/index.html> (accessed June 22, 2021).

31 Gyal, “‘I am concerned with the future of my children,’” p.14.



achieve the goal that  
students of all ethnic  
minorities will study in a  
school, live in a school,  
and grow up in a school.  
– China's State Council

researcher in Rongdrak (Chinese: Danba) County “found village schools had been incorporated in the town’s central primary [boarding] school, and the rural village schools were empty.”<sup>32</sup>

In 2012, China’s State Council curbed the trend of school consolidation for China as a whole due to popular outcry. The Council ruled that the first three grades of elementary school should, in principle, be non-residential throughout the country, while students in the upper grades of elementary school should be day students and “those in real need can board.”<sup>33</sup> The directive stated that villages and areas with small populations, remote locations, or poor transportation should set up primary schools or teaching posts. It went on to order local authorities to “resolutely stop the blind withdrawal of rural compulsory education schools,” requiring any future school closures to follow detailed procedures including hearings with the public.<sup>34</sup> On a national level since then, the percentage of boarding students has remained constant at approximately 22%.<sup>35</sup>

However, this reversal was not applied to minority regions. In fact, the 2015 State Council “Decision on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education” called on officials to do exactly the opposite: “strengthen boarding school construction” in minority areas and “achieve the goal that students of all ethnic minorities will study in a school, live in a school, and grow up in a school.”<sup>36</sup> The decree – one of the aims of which is to “realize the long-term stability of the country”<sup>37</sup> – is being actively implemented in Tibet, resulting in fewer and fewer children being able to access education while living at home.

32 Yang, Bai, “Hybridity and Tibetan language education policies in Sichuan,” *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* 28, no. 2 (2018): 6.

33 State Council, “Guanyu guifan nongcun yiwu jiaoyu xuexiao buju tiaozheng de yijian” [Suggestions of Office of the State Council on Adjusting the Distribution of Rural Compulsory Schools], State Council Issue [2012] No. 48, September 6, 2012, available at: [http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/2012-09/07/content\\_2218779.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/2012-09/07/content_2218779.htm) (accessed November 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20200611115120/http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/2012-09/07/content\\_2218779.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20200611115120/http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/2012-09/07/content_2218779.htm).

34 Suggestions of Office of the State Council on Adjusting the Distribution of Rural Compulsory Schools, 2012.

35 According to data published by the Ministry of Education, the percentage of boarding students at the compulsory education stage (grades 1-9) was at 21.97% in 2010 and 21.65% in 2017. For the 2010 data see Ministry of Education, available at: [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s180/moe\\_633/201203/t20120321\\_132634.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s180/moe_633/201203/t20120321_132634.html) (accessed August 20, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211125150652/http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s180/moe\\_633/201203/t20120321\\_132634.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20211125150652/http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s180/moe_633/201203/t20120321_132634.html). For the 2017 data see UNICEF, “Figure 8.20 Number of boarding students in primary and junior secondary education, 2017,” available at: <https://www.unicef.cn/en/figure-820-number-boarding-students-primary-and-junior-secondary-education-2017> (accessed August 20, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20211125151051/https://www.unicef.cn/en/figure-820-number-boarding-students-primary-and-junior-secondary-education-2017>.

36 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 77, citing “Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education.”

37 State Council, “Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education,” National Document [2015] 46, issued August 11, 2015, section 19, available at: [www.gov.cn/jwqk/content/2015-08/17/content\\_10097.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/content/2015-08/17/content_10097.htm) (accessed November 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210629235302/http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/content/2015-08/17/content\\_10097.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20210629235302/http://www.gov.cn/jwqk/content/2015-08/17/content_10097.htm)

The divergent policies for Chinese students and minority students means that the Chinese government is placing Tibetan children in boarding schools at a drastically higher rate than their Chinese counterparts. Government figures for all students in China (including Tibetans) indicate that 14.1% of rural elementary school children are boarding.<sup>38</sup> However, in the TAR alone (home to approximately 44% of Tibetans), that rate is more than five times higher, with 79.8%<sup>39</sup> of elementary school children boarding.<sup>40</sup> In comparison to individual provinces that are primarily Chinese but that, like Tibet, have large rural populations, there is still a 50-60% difference.<sup>41</sup> In Henan, for example, an inland province that is 98.8% Chinese and largely rural, only 18.58% of elementary students are boarding.<sup>42</sup> In Hunan, an inland province that is 89% Chinese and also largely rural, only 28.11% of all elementary and junior high students are boarding.<sup>43</sup> Tibetans are experiencing the effects of a policy that, today, deliberately targets non-Chinese children.

Although boarding school has been part of the education system in Tibet for decades, it wasn't until the school consolidation policy of the 2000s that the move from village day schools to boarding schools was so drastically undertaken, especially in the case of younger children. Researcher Yumiji Ji Ying notes that the policy "has been unprecedented in its scale of establishing centralised primary boarding schools [in Tibet]."<sup>44</sup> While the policy has been reversed for Chinese areas, Tibetan village schools continue to be closed and replaced by boarding schools – an explicit tool in the CCP's effort to assimilate Tibetans and neutralize potential threats to Party control.

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- 38 Ministry of Education, "Jiaoyubu jiedu 'Guowuyuan bangongting guanyu quanmian jiaqiang xiangcun xiao guimo xuexiao he xiangzhen jisuzhi xuexiao jianshe de zhidao yijian'" [Interpretation of the "Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening the Construction of Rural Small-scale Schools and Township Boarding Schools] by the Ministry of Education, May 11, 2018, available at: [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-05/11/content\\_5290308.htm#1](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-05/11/content_5290308.htm#1) (accessed July 7, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210913090759/http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-05/11/content\\_5290308.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20210913090759/http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-05/11/content_5290308.htm).
- 39 Department of Education of the Tibet Autonomous Region, "Xizang zizhiqiu jiaoyu shiye tongji ziliao (jichu jiaoyu)" [Statistics on Education in the Tibet Autonomous Region (Basic Education)], 2018, pp. 166-172, as cited in Xing Jun-li, "Xizang jisuzhi xuexiao jiaoshi gongzuo manyidu, lizhi yixiang jiqi guanxi" [Teachers' Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention and Their Relation in Tibetan Boarding Schools], *Teacher Development Research* 3, no. 2 (2019): 44.
- 40 Both numbers are from 2018.
- 41 Data were not available for all provinces that fit these criteria, but those for which there were show the same trend.
- 42 "2020 nian Henan sheng jiaoyu shiye fazhan tongji gongbao" [Statistical Communiqué on the Development of Education in Henan Province in 2020], March 24, 2021, available at: <https://www.163.com/dy/article/G5SS66Q50536B4A1.html> (accessed August 31, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913091112/https://www.163.com/dy/article/G5SS66Q50536B4A1.html>.
- 43 Hunan Bureau of Education, "2019 nian quansheng jiaoyu shiye fazhan gaikuang" [Overview of the province's education development in 2019], March 11, 2020, available at: [http://jyt.hunan.gov.cn/jyt/sjyt/cxxgk/ghjh/tjxx/202003/t20200312\\_11810778.html](http://jyt.hunan.gov.cn/jyt/sjyt/cxxgk/ghjh/tjxx/202003/t20200312_11810778.html) (accessed August 26, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210913091332/http://jyt.hunan.gov.cn/jyt/sjyt/cxxgk/ghjh/tjxx/202003/t20200312\\_11810778.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20210913091332/http://jyt.hunan.gov.cn/jyt/sjyt/cxxgk/ghjh/tjxx/202003/t20200312_11810778.html).
- 44 Ying, p. 4.



## REMOLDING SOULS AND MINDS<sup>45</sup>

The colonial boarding school system for Tibetan youth is at the heart of the CCP's effort to subsume Tibetans into Chinese culture and identity and eliminate all but token elements of their "Tibetanness."

Since coming to power in 2012, Xi Jinping has embraced a fundamental change in policy toward Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and other non-Chinese groups under CCP rule. The Party now seeks to remake non-Chinese identities into a single Chinese identity as a means of suppressing dissent and ensuring continued CCP control over regions like Tibet, East Turkistan (Chinese: Xinjiang), and Inner Mongolia. Xi has made this strategy explicit, proclaiming that, "Only through fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and all ethnic groups jointly safeguarding national security and social stability, can the infiltration and subversion of extremist and separatist thoughts [i.e., opposition to Chinese rule by minorities] be resisted and the aspiration of the people of all ethnic groups for a better life be fulfilled."<sup>46</sup> Inspired by the "second generation ethnic policies" put forward by a number of Chinese scholars, this is a major shift away from earlier approaches of nominal respect for diversity and distinct cultures.

The transformative policies under Xi are driven by a paternalistic and racist attitude toward non-Chinese groups under Beijing's control. As ethnic policy scholar James Leibold describes, the policies "work to actively alter the thoughts and behaviors of what Chinese authorities perceive to be a 'backward,' 'deviant,' and innately 'dangerous' sub-section of its population by uplifting their 'bio-quality'...and overseeing their rebirth as loyal, patriotic, and civilized Chinese citizens."<sup>47</sup> Scholar Gray Tuttle notes that, although consolidating control over border regions is a central aim of China's ethnic policies, they are "also an expression of deep-seated ethnic prejudices and racism at the core of contemporary Chinese society."<sup>48</sup> The Chinese view that other ethnic groups are inferior, backward, and uncivilized is not new, and assimilation has long been used as a tool to overcome these perceived deficiencies while simultaneously quelling resistance and dissent. However, Xi's embrace has given this racist frame new life. These attitudes and policies from Beijing are incorporated into the education system in a variety of ways: making Chinese the primary language throughout the education system and downgrading other native languages; ensuring ideological identification with the Party and the Chinese state; displacing Tibetan teachers with Chinese teachers; and breaking social, community, and family connections.

The colonial boarding school system for Tibetan youth is at the heart of the CCP's effort to subsume Tibetans into Chinese culture and identity and eliminate all but token elements of their "Tibetanness." When students are separated from their families, they lose the daily influences of language, culture, and religion that exist at home, and become more vulnerable to the norms and ideology of their school environment. If they have family nearby, some schools permit contact every weekend or every 10 days. Others see their families once a year at best (see more details on pages 30-31).

<sup>45</sup> Leibold, James, "Beyond Xinjiang: Xi Jinping's Ethnic Crackdown," *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Xinhua, "Xi Focus: Xi stresses high-quality development of Party's work on ethnic affairs," August 28, 2021, available at: [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c\\_1310154568.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/28/c_1310154568.htm) (accessed November 3, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Leibold, "Beyond Xinjiang."

<sup>48</sup> Tuttle, Gray. "China's Race Problem." *Foreign Affairs* 94 (2015): 39.



The 2015 State Council  
“Decision on Accelerating  
the Development of Ethnic  
Education” calls for  
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motherland, the Chinese  
nation, Chinese culture, the  
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and socialism with Chinese  
characteristics.”

CCP ideology and political objectives are heavily integrated into boarding school life. In 2018, the State Council bolstered these efforts by ordering officials to “actively carry out educational and teaching activities [in boarding schools] that are conducive to promoting ethnic unity and integration, and guide students to widely use the national language [i.e., Chinese] in school life and learning.”<sup>49</sup> The 2015 State Council “Decision on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education” requires “unremitting propaganda and education on socialism with Chinese characteristics and the China dream” and calls for guidance for students to “continuously strengthen their recognition of the great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics.”<sup>50</sup> James Leibold noted in 2019 that schools are seen as the “main ‘battlefield’ in ethnic unity education,” requiring that “patriotism ‘enter classrooms, enter teaching materials, and enter pupils’ minds so the seed of ethnic unity can take root and blossom in the youth and students of all ethnic groups.’”<sup>51</sup> This propaganda is central to the school experience.

A Tibetan now in exile who boarded at elementary school from 2000-2005 describes the patriotic education he received:

After finishing lunch, we had to gather in the dining room to watch documentary films about how much destruction and violence [was] caused by [the] Japanese during the War between China and Japan. We would not get dinner if anyone missed the film, [as] a punishment....Chinese History [class] was all about the great achievement of [China’s] military force during the war with Japan...the Great Wall of China, [and the] military and economic supremacy of China....I had no idea about my own country Tibet, and I didn’t know anything about other countries in the world when I was in Chinese boarding school. I always thought China was my country and Japanese people were my greatest enemy in my life....<sup>52</sup>

Such indoctrination leaves students who are living away from their communities extremely vulnerable to losing their connection to their history, their cultural roots, and the very aspects that make them Tibetan.

Students additionally lose access to their religion while at boarding school. China has a policy of separating religion and education, but when students are always on campus, this effectively means that religious observation is eliminated. Such bans often do not exist on paper and are missed by research that relies purely on documentary evidence, as are actions

49 News briefing by the Ministry of Education on the Document No. 27 issued by the State Council in 2018, “Quanmian jiaqiang lianglei xueiao jianshe, tuidong chengxiang yiwu jiaoyu yitihua fazhan” [Comprehensively strengthen the construction of two types of schools and promote the integrated development of urban and rural compulsory education], June 30, 2018, available at: [https://zgscxpcjy.com/details\\_show?NEWS\\_ID=360df1f4d8954fdbc055c7381aafbc8](https://zgscxpcjy.com/details_show?NEWS_ID=360df1f4d8954fdbc055c7381aafbc8) (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://zgscxpcjy.com/details\\_show?NEWS\\_ID=360df1f4d8954fdbc055c7381aafbc8](https://zgscxpcjy.com/details_show?NEWS_ID=360df1f4d8954fdbc055c7381aafbc8).

50 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 65.

51 Leibold, James. “Planting the seed: Ethnic policy in Xi Jinping’s new era of cultural nationalism.” *China Brief* 19, no. 22 (2019).

52 Testimony 3, Appendix 3.

One boarding school principal in the TAR, for example, detailed how on major religious holidays, his school assigns personnel to intercept students on the street and escort them back to school if they try to take part in local religious events.<sup>53</sup>

by school administrators that restrict Tibetan students' access to religious activities.

One boarding school principal in the TAR, for example, detailed how on major religious holidays, his school assigns personnel to intercept students on the street and escort them back to school if they try to take part in local religious events.<sup>53</sup> A teacher in Mili (Chinese: Muli) Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan stated that for those "who [wish to] take a leave of absence on the pretext of going home to participate in religious activities, we generally do not give approval."<sup>54</sup>

For Tibetan students, this ban on religious activity can also extend beyond school grounds. In Lhasa, for example, school children – along with Tibetan government workers and retirees – are barred from visiting the Jokhang Temple,<sup>55</sup> widely considered to be the most important and sacred temple in Tibet. Such strict control of religious pursuits combined with long periods away from home means boarding school students are growing up with very little contact with the religious and cultural traditions that form an integral part of Tibetan life.

Meanwhile, the Tibetan language is facing unprecedented attacks from the highest levels of the Chinese government, with schools being the main domain of this assault. China's deceptively named "bilingual education" policy is in reality a system of linguistic imperialism where the instruction is in Chinese and Tibetan is relegated to the status of a second language. Although this policy is presented as a means of enabling minority groups to succeed, in practice it makes Tibetans lose their own language at a young age. In January 2021, a committee of the National People's Congress ruled that local regulations permitting schools to use minority languages are "incompatible with the Chinese Constitution."<sup>56</sup> In July 2021, the Ministry of Education ordered that all "ethnic and rural" kindergartens (usually ages three to five) must operate in Mandarin by fall 2021.<sup>57</sup> These follow other earlier

53 He Nengkun, "Xizang Nongmuqu jiaoyu tiaoshi yanjiu" [Adaptation of the Basic Education in Rural Tibet: An Empirical Study from the Perspective of the Social System Theory], (PhD Thesis, Southwest University, April 20, 2012), 94.

54 Xu Jianhua, "Duo Minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhong de minzu wenhua guanzhao wenti yanjiu—jiyu Daliangshan Muli zangzu zizhixian de kaocha" [A Study on the Cultural Perspective in Multi-Ethnic Boarding School—Survey on Multi-Tibetan Inhabited Areas] (MA Thesis, Southwest University, April 11, 2017), 29. See Appendix 2 for full quote.

55 Tibet Watch, "Tibetans Blocked from Buddhist Site in Lhasa While Chinese Tourists Allowed In," August 7, 2020, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2020/8/12/tibetans-blocked-from-buddhist-sites-in-lhasa-while-chinese-tourists-allowed-in> (accessed November 22, 2021).

56 Human Rights Watch, "China Signals Roll-Back on Minority Languages," January 28, 2021, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/28/china-signals-roll-back-minority-languages> (accessed November 5, 2021).

57 This plan includes all areas of Tibet as well as "ethnic and rural" areas that include other minority groups such as Uyghurs and Southern Mongolians. Ministry of Education, "Jiaoyubu bangongting guanyu shishi xueqian ertong putonghua jiaoyu 'tongyu tongyin' jihua de tongzhi" [Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on the Implementation of the "Children's Homophony" Plan for Putonghua Education for Preschool Children], July 23, 2021, available at: [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3129/202108/t20210802\\_548318.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3129/202108/t20210802_548318.html) (accessed August 24, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210910183948/http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3129/202108/t20210802\\_548318.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20210910183948/http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3129/202108/t20210802_548318.html).

policies that were aimed at eliminating Tibetan-medium instruction in the few areas in which it still remains.<sup>58</sup>

Chinese scholar Yao Jijun states that bilingual education at the preschool level is intended to integrate Chinese language into Tibetan children as “a means of eliminating elements of instability [political unrest] in Tibetan regions.”

Targeting children in both boarding and day schools with Chinese-language instruction is causing Tibetan children to lose their facility with their own language,<sup>59 60</sup> as well as their ability to communicate with their grandparents and, in some cases, parents. As one Tibetan from Lhasa told Human Rights Watch, “Bilingual education is about breaking the continuity between my generation, with a fair knowledge of Tibetan, and the next.”<sup>61</sup>

Like schools and preschools more generally, most boarding schools now operate in Chinese. An elementary school teacher in eastern Tibet shared how boarding preschool leads to loss of language:

In [my area] it is mandatory to send children aged four and above to boarding schools. Most of these children are from nomadic backgrounds. Usually there are very few Tibetan teachers; the majority are Chinese. So teachers only speak in Mandarin and conduct all school curriculum in Mandarin, including nursery rhymes and bedtime stories. *When they join primary school at age seven, hardly any of them can speak Tibetan.*<sup>62</sup> (emphasis added)

There has also been a dramatic expansion of non-boarding Chinese-language preschools over the past decade.<sup>63</sup> Chinese scholar Yao Jijun states that bilingual education at the preschool level is intended to integrate Chinese language into Tibetan children as “a means of eliminating elements of instability [political unrest] in Tibetan regions.”<sup>64</sup>

In the TAR, Chinese is explicitly designated as the primary language of instruction,<sup>65</sup> and nationally standardized Chinese language textbooks for elementary and junior high students

58 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” pp. 15-36; Radio Free Asia, “Tibetan Schoolchildren Lose Fluency in Native Language as Schools Switch to Mandarin,” April 16, 2020, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/language-04162020170950.html> (accessed August 24, 2021).

59 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet.”

60 According to one source, “If you go to the Chinese-run schools, your Chinese and English becomes good but your Tibetan becomes weak. If you go to the schools run by monasteries you can be good at all three.” See Source 3 in Appendix 1. Also see Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” pp. 31-32.

61 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 119.

62 Online Commenter 1, see full comment in Appendix 1.

63 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” pp. 41-47.

64 Cited in Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 6.

65 TAR People’s Government Office, “2019 nian Xizang zizhi qu zhengfu gongzuo baogao” [2019 Tibet Autonomous Region Government Work Report], June 27, 2019, available at: [http://www.xizang.gov.cn/zwqk/xxfb/zfgzbg/201911/t20191114\\_123622.html](http://www.xizang.gov.cn/zwqk/xxfb/zfgzbg/201911/t20191114_123622.html) (accessed August 24, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20200927102510/http://xizang.gov.cn/zwqk/xxfb/zfgzbg/201911/t20191114\\_123622.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20200927102510/http://xizang.gov.cn/zwqk/xxfb/zfgzbg/201911/t20191114_123622.html).

have been mandated.<sup>66</sup> The textbook content revolves around the lived experience of Chinese students, (e.g., focusing on traditional Chinese holidays) and Tibetan students have been reported to struggle with the all-Chinese curriculum.<sup>67</sup> According to recently published plans by the Chinese Ministry of Education, these textbooks will soon put particular focus on “Xi Jinping Thought,” the “outstanding traditional culture of the Chinese nation,” “revolutionary tradition,” and state security,<sup>68</sup> furthering the Party’s ideological goals.

The enforcement of Chinese-language education on this scale is a major new development that reflects Xi Jinping’s determination to remake “ethnic minorities” after a Chinese model. It has enormous negative implications for the maintenance of familial bonds, for the intergenerational transmission of culture, and for Tibetan students’ sense of identity and self-worth beyond the school compound. A Tibetan from Lhasa interviewed by Human Rights Watch describes the motivation they see behind Chinese-language kindergartens (preschools):

The government’s policy of teaching [very young] Tibetan children Chinese in kindergarten has not been clearly and widely announced, and it has nothing in common with the special provisions for autonomous nationality regions, and the constitutional guarantees of respect for nationality religion and culture....Building kindergartens in the villages and teaching Chinese to the [very young children] is about changing the language environment for the next generation, or, to be blunt, it is an aggressive policy to disrupt the continuity of language transmission between generations of Tibetan[s]...If it succeeds, it is not difficult to foresee that Tibetan religion, culture, consciousness and identity will become Sinicized.<sup>69</sup>

Tibetan suspicions that Beijing seeks to achieve nothing less than the eventual eradication of the Tibetan language are reinforced by the attitude some Chinese teachers have displayed toward minority languages and cultures, and their conscious attempt to replace Tibetan with Chinese not only in the classroom but also outside it. “First of all, it is necessary to popularize Mandarin in our students’ daily life. We should ask our students to speak Mandarin inside and outside the classroom. Second, teachers should popularize Mandarin in the households and local community,” Cao, a Chinese teacher at a Tibetan boarding school in Sichuan recommended in a study. The same teacher later explained in an interview why

66 Starting in the autumn of 2018, the TAR has strengthened the “bilingual” curriculum, and all elementary schools, and first and second grades of junior high schools in the region began using the state-compiled textbooks of “Morality and Rule of Law”, “Language” (i.e., Chinese), and “[Chinese] History” (《道德与法治》《语文》《历史》). see Appendix 2.

67 Yang Liu, “Ali diqu yiwu jiaoyu tongbian ‘san ke’ jiaocai shiyong qingkuang diaocha yu fenxi” [Investigation and Analysis of the Use of the Centralized Compiled “Three Subjects” Teaching Materials for Compulsory Education in Ngari Prefecture], *Xizang Jiaoyu*, 2020(9), pp. 5-8. For more details, see Appendix 2.

68 Guangming Daily, “Peigen zhuhun tigao kecheng jiaocai jianshe shuiping” [Fostering Roots and Casting Souls: Improving the Quality of Curriculum and Teaching Material Construction], August 25, 2021, available at: <http://edu.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0825/c1006-32206845.html> (accessed August 25, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210825013518/http://edu.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0825/c1006-32206845.html>.

69 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” p. 47.



In short, our teaching effectiveness can be described as “5+2=0”. We fear [the students] staying at home [with their parents] for two days [on weekends], because they will forget what they learned during the five-day boarding school.

– Chinese Teacher at a Tibetan Boarding School

they opposed allowing Tibetan students to go home to their parents on the weekends: “In short, our teaching effectiveness can be described as ‘5+2=0’. We fear [the students] staying at home [with their parents] for two days [on weekends], because they will forget what they learned during the five-day boarding school.”<sup>70</sup> The assumption of Chinese cultural superiority and implicit dismissal of the value of Tibetan language and culture reflects a common outlook among Chinese teachers.<sup>71</sup>

The transformation of “Tibetan religion, culture, consciousness and identity” is being carried out by design, developed at the highest levels of the Party. Boarding school is a particularly effective tool in this effort because children are removed from the influence of their family and community and kept under the eye of the state around the clock. Replacing Tibetan with Chinese as the medium of instruction and dwelling heavily on the importance of patriotism to the Chinese nation and loyalty to the Party, these schools employ a range of tools, tactics, and strategies to reshape the hearts and minds of Tibetan students.

<sup>70</sup> Yang, “Hybridity and Tibetan language education policies in Sichuan,” p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> For example, see Yang, Miaoyan. “Moralities and contradictories in the educational aid for Tibet: contesting the multi-layered saviour complex.” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41, no. 7 (2020): 620-632.

## PARENTAL “CHOICE” IN A COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT

Because China's school consolidation measures are still being aggressively implemented, schooling for Tibetans is now primarily residential, even at the elementary level. Options Tibetan parents used to have – monastery day schools, other privately-run schools, or education in exile in India – are steadily being eliminated. In this situation, Tibetan parents are compelled by a lack of viable alternatives to send their children to boarding school.

Multiple factors drive parents to enroll their children in the colonial boarding school system. Parents want their children to have a quality education that equips them in their rapidly changing world: a world in which traditional Tibetan ways of life have been replaced by the dominance of the cash economy, increased urbanization, and systemic racism that disadvantages Tibetans' access to employment and services. Because China's school consolidation measures are still being aggressively implemented, schooling for Tibetans is now primarily residential, even at the elementary level. Options Tibetan parents used to have – monastery day schools, other privately-run schools, or education in exile in India – are steadily being eliminated.<sup>72</sup> In this situation, Tibetan parents are compelled by a lack of viable alternatives to send their children to boarding school.

Simultaneously, a more direct and systematic form of coercion is at work. Accounts we have obtained from Tibet describe measures such as fines, other penalties, and outright threats being used to force parents to send their children to boarding schools. More importantly, it cannot be ignored that Tibetans live in a political environment that is fundamentally coercive and colonial, where the heavy hand of the state guides even the most personal of decisions. Xi Jinping's effort to force Tibetans, Uyghurs, and others to adopt a homogenous Chinese identity means that simply being Tibetan has become increasingly criminalized. For example, live-streaming in Tibetan is not allowed on China's most popular video-sharing apps, Tik-Tok (Douyin) and Kuaishou,<sup>73</sup> language preservation associations and chat groups are targeted,<sup>74</sup> and advocacy for Tibetan-language teaching is punished with imprisonment.<sup>75</sup> An intensive

72 For example, see Tibet Watch, “Tibetan Monks Holding Classes for Children will be Punished, China Warns,” February 26, 2019, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2019/6/17/tibetan-monks-holding-classes-for-children-will-be-punished-china-warns> (accessed November 28, 2021); Radio Free Asia, “Tibetan Private Language Schools Closed Down in Sichuan,” June 3, 2021, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/schools-06032021165545.html> (accessed August 28, 2021); and “China Closes Tibetan School in Qinghai, Leaving Many Students Adrift,” September 14, 2021, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/school-09142021135447.html> (accessed November 20, 2021).

73 It has also recently been banned from another streaming app and removed from a language-learning app: Protocol, “Chinese tech companies appear to censor Uyghur and Tibetan,” November 8, 2021, available at: <https://www.protocol.com/china/bilibili-talkmate-uyghur-tibetan-tech> (accessed November 17, 2021).

74 For example, see the recent case of Dza Wonpo: Tibet Watch, “Over 100 Tibetan detainees released in Dza Wonpo after month-long torture and interrogation,” October 5, 2021, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/10/5/over-100-tibetan-detainees-released-in-dza-wonpo-after-month-long-torture-and-interrogation> (accessed November 19, 2021).

75 For example, see Human Rights Watch, “China: Activist Convicted for Promoting Tibetan Language,” May 22, 2018, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/23/china-activist-convicted-promoting-tibetan-language> (accessed November 19, 2021); Tibet Watch, “Two Tibetan youngsters detained for chat group in Tibetan language,” September 9, 2021, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/9/9/two-tibetan-youngsters-detained-for-chat-group-conversation-in-tibetan-language> (accessed November 19, 2021); and Tibet Watch, “Teenage Tibetan petitioner arrested in Ngaba by Chinese police authorities,” August 18, 2021, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/8/18/teenage-tibetan-petitioner-arrested-in-ngaba-chinese-police-authorities> (accessed November 19, 2021).

surveillance regime monitors Tibetans' daily activities and communication both off- and on-line. What little space has existed at times for views diverging from those of the Party has largely disappeared. In this context, Tibetans do not have to be explicitly threatened to know that any protest about the colonial boarding schooling system or the lack of alternatives will have serious repercussions.

Tibetan parents' views of state-sponsored schooling have shifted, beginning in the 2000s, from skepticism about both the value and intent<sup>76</sup> to a belief that attendance is necessary in order for their children to survive in their profoundly changing world. Starting in the mid-1990s, Tibetans were subjected to a series of state projects and policies that led to extremely rapid shifts from farming or nomadic life on the grasslands to settled housing in urban or semi-urban areas and from livelihoods based on the land to dependency on state subsidies and migratory work.<sup>77</sup> Huatse Gyal describes the unhappy calculus that parents face in one area of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), Sichuan:

As the cash economy has become paramount...and traditional communal grazing practices have become less and less feasible [due to government policies] most villagers are acutely aware that their way of life is changing in ways over which they have no control. As most parents today often say, "I am concerned with the future of my children."....This has forced them to consider other livelihood prospects for their children. Sending their children to school, with the hope of them becoming *lishaypa* [government officials] is one such option.<sup>78</sup>

The sense of both the necessity of education and the lack of desirable schooling options is reflected in this account from a Tibetan parent:

My only son was sent to [a] state-run boarding school at age seven....At that time, my wife and I both strongly believed that without proper education, it would be very hard for my son to be able to lead a good life, so we made the decision with heavy hearts. In the meantime, we also talked with other parents who were [experiencing] similar hardship and tried to talk to government officials, but all our effort was in vain.<sup>79</sup>

Another Tibetan described how boarding elementary school creates a lose-lose situation for parents:

76 Gyal, "I am concerned with the future of my children," pp. 16-18; Postiglione, Gerard, Ben Jiao, and Li Xiaoliang. "Education change and development in nomadic communities of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR)." *International Journal of Chinese Education* 1, no. 1 (2012): 93-96.

77 Andrew Fischer highlights how these state development policies, coming on top of high levels of outright poverty and illiteracy in Tibet, actually compounded the pre-existing educational, economic and political inequalities for Tibetans and therefore increased, rather than decreased, the exclusion they experience. (Fischer, p. 5).

78 Gyal, "I am concerned with the future of my children," p. 22.

79 Source 5, see Appendix 1.

In the highly repressive environment of Tibet today, parents neither have the space to oppose or resist the state's decisions or policies, nor do they have the freedom to demand the kind of educational systems they would like their children to have. Collective action, which has always held high risks for Tibetans under Chinese rule, has become almost unthinkable during Xi Jinping's reign.



I know of children aged four to five who don't want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother's laps, begging not to be sent away and even refusing to go back. Both the children and the parents are unwilling.

— A Tibetan from Amdo (Qinghai)

True, compared to earlier, the [enrollment] age for boarding school is much younger now. One of the reasons is probably that it has become a part of the regulations of the public [government] schools...If we look at it from another angle, it is part of surviving in the competitive nature of society today, to be able to compete with other children. If we don't have our Tibetan children in school at an early age, there is a fear of falling behind. Either way it is not good for us.<sup>80</sup>

Tibetan researcher Yumji Ji Ying finds that 12 parents and grandparents she interviewed in Tsoho (Chinese: Hainan) supported their [grand]children's attendance at boarding school out of hope that it would translate into social mobility, while also expressing concern about loss of language and culture.<sup>81</sup>

As Tibetans seek out educational opportunities, the school consolidation policy has been a critical factor in driving students into colonial boarding schools. Tibetan researcher Tsering Bum describes how families in one prefecture of Qinghai seek access to the healthcare and educational services that are available only in towns. But two national educational policies — one that requires that every child have nine years of compulsory schooling, and a second that requires rural Tibetan schools to be eliminated through consolidation — “indirectly force pastoralists off their grazing lands with threats of monetary fines and denial of state financial and material subsidies if families do not send their children to schools.”<sup>82</sup> In fact, in eastern Tibet, the desire to access education for their children or to be closer to children already in boarding schools has led Tibetan nomads to participate in resettlement projects and migrate to urban areas.<sup>83</sup>

In the highly repressive environment of Tibet today, parents neither have the space to oppose or resist the state's decisions or policies nor do they have the freedom to demand the kind of educational systems they would like their children to have. Collective action, which has always held high risks for Tibetans under Chinese rule, has become almost unthinkable during Xi Jinping's reign.

Parents who do attempt to resist sending their children to boarding schools are met with a variety of coercive measures. One person in Amdo (Qinghai) reported:

I know of children aged four to five who don't want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother's laps, begging not to be sent away and even refusing to go back. Both the children and the parents are unwilling.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Online Commenter 2, see Appendix 1.

<sup>81</sup> Ying, pp. 10-12.

<sup>82</sup> Bum, Tsering. “Translating ecological migration policy: a conjunctural analysis of Tibetan pastoralist resettlement in China.” *Critical Asian Studies* 50, no. 4 (2018): 3-4.

<sup>83</sup> Ying, p. 4 and Elisa Cencetti “New Settlements on the Tibetan Plateau of Amdo-Qinghai: Spatialized Power Devices,” in *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*, ed. Trine Brox and Ildiko Beller-Hann, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2013) 159-182.

<sup>84</sup> Source 1, see full text in Appendix 1.



Another Tibetan recounted a process of pressure and intimidation after their village opposed sending children in Grades 1-3 to boarding school. They described one of multiple visits from authorities:

Two heads from the township, the education head from the county as well as around six police officers attended. They said, “....Today is the last day we will come. If we have to come back tomorrow, it won’t be good....You have been discussing this on WeChat, we have heard about this, and if you don’t listen [to us] we will squeeze [pressure] you one by one. That is easy for us to do.

If you continue to choose not to acknowledge this policy and refuse to send your children to the schools, we will consider this to be a protest....In our county there are many education projects coming from the province. If you don’t listen you will ruin all those future plans. You will be held responsible for that.”<sup>85</sup>

Radio Free Asia reported in September 2020 that in Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren), eastern Tibet, “local primary schools have been closed by government order, and Tibetan children are being forced against their parents’ wishes into boarding schools in areas far away.” They continue:

The Tibetan parents have appealed to Chinese authorities not to separate their children from them by sending them off to other regions for schooling and when the authorities did not heed their request, some of them staged a protest. The parents’ protest quickly triggered a crackdown by police, with police vehicles and blaring sirens responding quickly to the protest scene, and one male protester was taken into custody...[and] later released. The children’s parents were finally forced to send their children away to the Chinese government-designated boarding schools.”<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, Tibet Watch reported in September 2021 that 1,216 Tibetan children from Matoe (Chinese: Maduo) County, Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture had been sent to boarding schools in Xining, Golog County and Zogan Rawar township months after the area was hit by an earthquake. At a public meeting held by Chinese authorities, “Parents were instructed to raise their hands if they accepted the relocation as arranged by the government. However, they found themselves in a situation where no option to refuse was at their disposal.”<sup>87</sup>

Some families have been told that if they do not send their children to boarding preschool, the children will not be allowed to enroll in elementary school. Parents also face financial penalties or threats that their other children will not be able to attend in the future:

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<sup>85</sup> Source 2, see full text in Appendix 1.

<sup>86</sup> Radio Free Asia, “Tibetan School Year Begins Under New Restrictions, Mandarin-only Instruction,” September 12, 2020, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/school-09122020104223.html> (accessed July 5, 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Tibet Watch, “Survivors of Earthquake under Surveillance and Uncertainty,” September 20, 2021, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/9/30/survivors-of-earthquake-under-surveillance-and-uncertainty> (accessed November 5, 2021).

From the age of four, the local officials tell the family it is mandatory to send the children to boarding schools and if families do not comply, they are asked to pay a fine. Sometimes the officials tell the families that if they don't send their [first] child to boarding school, then their second or third child will never be allowed to enroll. With [these] different methods, they are coercing the family to comply. So, usually out of fear, the family sends their children to boarding schools.<sup>88</sup>

These reports and testimonials attest to the overwhelming pressure that Tibetan parents feel to place their children in colonial boarding schools. This pressure is experienced in a variety of ways: as fear for their child's future in an environment of structural racism and radical socio-economic change; as manipulation through direct threats and intimidation; and finally, as powerlessness due to an abject lack of other schooling options, options that have been actively eliminated by the state. In sum, Chinese authorities have created a system in which Tibetan parents see no alternative but to send their children away.

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88. Source 1, see full text in Appendix 1.

## THREE OUT OF FOUR TIBETAN STUDENTS ARE IN COLONIAL BOARDING SCHOOLS

At least 806,218 Tibetan students out of a total of 1,039,370 are living at boarding schools. This number represents 78% of all Tibetan students from ages six to 18.

The policies discussed above have resulted in the shift of Tibetan schooling to a system that is almost entirely residential. Calculations based on official data suggest that at least 806,218 Tibetan students out of a total of 1,039,370 are living at boarding schools.<sup>89</sup> This number represents 78% of all Tibetan students from ages six to 18.<sup>90</sup> While this might seem like a shockingly high number, even more shocking is the fact that this is a conservative estimate, as explained below. We believe the number is likely closer to 900,000.

As noted earlier, official statistics in China can be inflated to meet targets or quotas, so they cannot be viewed with absolute certainty. Nonetheless, the sheer size of these numbers is an indication of the scope and scale of the colonial boarding school program in Tibet, whether or not they are precisely accurate. In Canada, it is believed that approximately one-third of all school-aged Indigenous children attended the country's devastating residential schools at their height.<sup>91</sup> Considering the extent of the intergenerational trauma and harm done to Indigenous communities as a result of the residential school system there, it is not difficult to imagine the potential toll China's current colonial boarding school system could wreak on generations of Tibetans.

It is challenging to find statistics on how many Tibetan students are in boarding schools. Although the colonial boarding school system is discussed in state media reports that expound on its "life-changing"<sup>92</sup> benefits, we could not find a central source detailing how many Tibetan children are currently enrolled. Data collection was further hampered by Tibet's division between numerous different administrative jurisdictions, many of which include Chinese areas.

Therefore, we arrived at the number 806,218 by:

- 1) estimating the number of Tibetan students in a particular area by first taking the percentage of the population reported to be Tibetan<sup>93</sup> and multiplying it by the total

<sup>89</sup> See table on page 25 and footnotes 98-106 for location and sources.

<sup>90</sup> See table on following page.

<sup>91</sup> National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160420012021/http://umanitoba.ca/centres/nctr/overview.html> (accessed July 5, 2021).

<sup>92</sup> For example, see CGTN, "A day in the life of a Tibetan high schooler," April 1, 2019, available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514c79557a4c33457a6333566d54/index.html> (accessed November 25, 2021) and Xinhua, "Prosperity On The Plateau: Free education for 15 years from pre-school to high school," December 12, 2020, available at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/02/c\\_139558901.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/02/c_139558901.htm) (accessed November 25, 2021).

<sup>93</sup> Numbers released so far for the 2020 census provide an ethnic breakdown for the TAR but not for other provinces that include areas of Tibet. Therefore, we used 2020 census data for the Tibetan population in the TAR, 2010 census data for Tibetan prefectures in Qinghai and the most recent available Statistical Bulletins and Communiqués issued by local governments in the remaining areas that are part of Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces.

student number for that area;

2) finding the percentage of students in the particular area reported to be enrolled in boarding school; and

3) applying the percentage of boarding students to the number of Tibetan students.

Detailed explanations of the sources and steps used for deriving each number by location are provided in the table below and corresponding footnotes.

There are several reasons that the estimates presented in the table are likely low. Most importantly, they assume that the percentage of Tibetan students from the TAR or a given Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture who are boarding is the same as the percentage of Chinese students from the same area who are boarding. However, the colonial boarding school system is specifically aimed at Tibetans: as described in earlier sections, “ethnic minorities,” not Chinese students, are being targeted by the school consolidation policy today. Additionally, Chinese populations in Tibet are concentrated in urban areas – Lhasa in the TAR and other cities in eastern Tibet – while the consolidation policy is focused on rural areas. Other policies, like the TAR’s “Three Guarantees” which provides food, tuition, and lodging to students, also target farmers, herders, and marginalized urban families;<sup>94</sup> the vast majority of whom are Tibetan.<sup>95</sup> Other sources also explicitly state that boarding programs are for “rural areas” or “pastoral plateau areas.”<sup>96</sup> This means that Tibetans are almost certainly represented in boarding schools at higher percentages than Chinese students.

As well, the total number of Tibetan students is likely underestimated in the first place, because Tibetans have higher birth rates than Chinese people and, therefore, likely make up a larger proportion of the student-age population than of the population as a whole.

In addition, most of the available data on boarding enrollment rates are several years old, but the boarding system and school consolidation have continued to expand up to the present. Enrollment rates will have continued to grow in the intervening years as more village schools were shut down.

94 China Tibet News, “Xizang quanmian shixian 15 nian mianfei jiaoyu jinnian yi luoshi zijin chao 5 yi yuan” [Tibet fully realizes 15 years of free education: Over 500 million yuan have been invested this year], available at: [https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/sxxz/whjy/201808/t20180808\\_48102.html](https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/sxxz/whjy/201808/t20180808_48102.html) (accessed October 22, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211122145221/https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/sxxz/whjy/201808/t20180808\\_48102.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20211122145221/https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/sxxz/whjy/201808/t20180808_48102.html).

95 Andrew Fischer notes, for example, that “Tibetan areas manifest an exceptional structural asymmetry whereby the most educated category of local residents (urban Tibetan men) is much less educated on average than even the least educated category of inter-provincial migrants competing in local urban labour markets (i.e. rural women from Sichuan).” (Fischer, p. 5).

96 Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, “Shisan wu’ qi wozhou jiaoyu shiye gaige fazhan jishi” [Report on the reform and development of education in our prefecture during the “13th Five-Year Plan” period], December 15, 2020, available at: <http://www.gzz.gov.cn/gzzrmz/c101413/202012/50e4339996fe4d92917721f69d0e40ae.shtml> (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913134626/http://www.gzz.gov.cn/gzzrmz/c101413/202012/50e4339996fe4d92917721f69d0e40ae.shtml>.

Finally, there have been individual reports of four- and five-year-olds boarding in Qinghai and TAR,<sup>97</sup> and this age group is not represented in the number above.

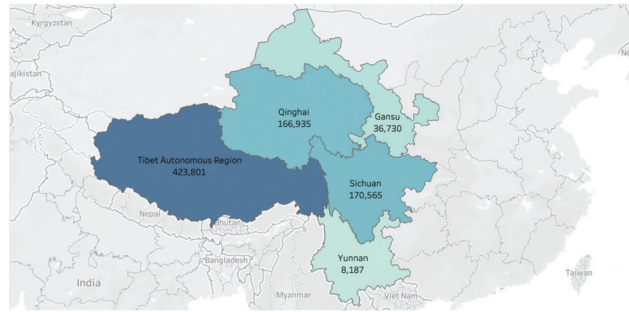
**Minimum Number of Tibetan Children Ages 6 to 18 Estimated to Be  
in Colonial Boarding Schools**

Region/Provinces	Year	Total Tibetan Students	Total Tibetan Colonial Boarding School Students	Percent
<b>Tibet Autonomous Region</b> <i>(Includes TAR Inland Schooling program)</i>	<b>2019</b>	<b>521,715</b>	<b>423,801<sup>98</sup></b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Qinghai</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>215,027</b>	<b>166,935<sup>99</sup></b>	<b>78%</b>
<i>(Includes Tsojang (Ch: Haibei), Tsoho (Ch: Hainan), Malho (Huangnan), Golog (Ch: Guoluo), Tsonub (Ch: Haixi), and Yülshül (Ch: Yushu))</i>				
<b>Sichuan</b>	<b>2016-2019</b>	<b>220,370</b>	<b>170,565</b>	<b>77%</b>
<i>Ngaba (Ch: Aba)</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>64,065</i>	<i>47,467<sup>100</sup></i>	<i>74%</i>
<i>Kardze (Ch: Ganzi)</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>149,027</i>	<i>118,116<sup>101</sup></i>	<i>79%</i>
<i>Mili (Ch: Muli) County</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>7,278</i>	<i>4,982<sup>102</sup></i>	<i>68%</i>
<b>Gansu</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>64,840</b>	<b>36,730</b>	<b>57%</b>
<i>Kanlho (Ch: Gannan)</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>58,901</i>	<i>33,456<sup>103</sup></i>	<i>57%</i>
<i>Bairi (Ch: Tianzhu)</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>5,939<sup>104</sup></i>	<i>3,274</i>	<i>55%</i>
<b>Yunnan</b> <i>(Includes Dechen (Ch: Diqing))</i>	<b>2020</b>	<b>17,418</b>	<b>8,187<sup>105</sup></b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,039,370<sup>106</sup></b>	<b>806,218</b>	<b>78%</b>

<sup>97</sup> Source 1 and Online Commenter 1 in Appendix 1; Testimony 2 in Appendix 3.

The following map illustrates the distribution of Tibetan colonial boarding students across the Chinese provinces that encompass Tibet, based on the numbers above.

Number of Tibetan Boarding Students by Province



98 At the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, 79.8% of primary school students and 80.5% of junior high school students in the region were boarding (Source: Department of Education of the Tibet Autonomous Region, "Xizang zizhiq jiaoyu shiye tongji ziliao (jichu jiaoyu)" [Statistics on Education in the Tibet Autonomous Region (Basic Education)], 2018, pp.166-172). A percentage for senior high school students was not provided. To calculate the total number of Tibetan boarding students in TAR, we first applied the 2017-18 percentages listed above to the TAR elementary and junior high school populations as of 2019 (for a total of 384,625 boarding students out of 480,760 students overall) and then applied the percentage of Tibetans (86.02%) of the total population of TAR to those (for a total of 330,854 Tibetan students in boarding schools). The 2019 numbers were drawn from the 2019 Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, "Part I: The Development of the Educational Undertaking," December 2020, which put the total student population (elementary, junior, senior, and vocational high school) at 571,662. For senior and vocational high school, we applied the same percentage as for junior high schools, that is, 80.5%, for a total of 73,176 boarding students out of an estimated 90,902 total students (same source), at least 62,945 (86.02%) of whom are Tibetan. (This is a conservative estimate as generally more senior high schools are boarding schools than any other level is, as noted by the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 2017 that senior high schools should be "concentrated in the cities" and "managed in a centralized fashion" (Source: People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region, "Zang zheng fa (2017) 18 hao 'Xizang zizhiq renmin zhengfu guanyu tongchou tuijin xianyunfei chengxiang yiwujiaoyu yitihua gaige fazhan de shishi yijian' [Document No. 18 (2017): Implementation Opinions of the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region on Promoting the Integrated Reform and Development of Urban and Rural Compulsory Education in the Counties], August 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.waizi.org.cn/policy/22960.html> (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913092605/https://www.waizi.org.cn/policy/22960.html>.) Finally 30,000 students from the TAR Inland Schooling program (Ch: 内地西藏班 Neidi Xizang ban) have been added to both the total boarding and the total TAR student numbers; this includes an unknown number of post-secondary students. (Source: TAR CPC Committee, "Xizang quanmian shixian 15 nian mianfei jiaoyu jinnian yi luoshi zijin chao 5 yi yuan" [Tibet has fully realized 15 years of free education, this year alone more than 500 million yuan in funds implemented], August 8, 2018, available at: [https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/xzx/whjy/201808/t20180808\\_48102.html](https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/xzx/whjy/201808/t20180808_48102.html) (accessed July 6, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210913092723/https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/xzx/whjy/201808/t20180808\\_48102.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20210913092723/https://www.xzdw.gov.cn/xzx/whjy/201808/t20180808_48102.html)).

- 99 Citing the "Concise Statistical Analysis of the Development of Education in Qinghai Province (2015)" published by the Qinghai Department of Education, Ma Cun-fang, a professor with the Institute of Political Studies of Qinghai University For Nationalities, writes: *The proportion of secondary and elementary students in boarding schools is as high as 85.98% and 72.53%, respectively, and there is a trend of boarding students getting younger.* (Source: Cun-fang, Ma "Qinghai zangqu jisuzhi xuesheng qingxu zhili yu xinli jiankang guanxi yanjiu" [Study of the Relationship Between Qinghai Tibetan Boarding Students' Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health], *Journal of Qinghai Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 39, no. 4 (July 2017): 5) **Note** In this case, secondary schools include both junior and senior high school. We applied these percentages to the total student population of the six Tibetan prefectures in Qinghai Province (student population data are drawn from the Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2020, "18-5 Basic Statistics on Primary Schools in Main Years" in Ch.18, Education, Science and Technology, August 2020, p. 451, and "18-4 Basic Statistics on Regular Secondary Schools in Main Years", p. 450). We then used the percentage of Tibetans in each prefecture as noted in the 2010 National Census prefectural communiques to determine the number of Tibetan students in each prefecture.
- 100 A representative of the Ngaba Prefecture Education Bureau posted online on July 9, 2020 that Ngaba Prefecture had 281 residential schools (elementary through senior high school) with 79,790 students (73.53% of all elementary and middle school students) boarding. Of those, 40,721 students (63.88%) were in elementary, 25,252 (89.36%) in junior high, 13,663 (87.11%) in senior high school, and 154 (86.52%) in special education; <https://ly.scol.com.cn/thread?tid=2811516&display=1&typeid=5&act=type&page=1> (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913093023/https://ly.scol.com.cn/thread?tid=2811516&display=1&typeid=5&act=type&page=1>. According to the 2019 Ngaba Statistical Bulletin, the total number of students in Ngaba Prefecture is 107,690. The same bulletin lists the percentage of Tibetans in the prefecture as 59.49%. Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture 2019 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin, April 23, 2020, available at: <https://tjj.abazhou.gov.cn/abzj/c103833/202004/400e620e8cc84cf19df973f0d8e97bf.shtml>, (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211122141234/https://mahmhxe.com/tongjigongbao/18355\\_5.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20211122141234/https://mahmhxe.com/tongjigongbao/18355_5.html).
- 101 The number of boarding students is sourced from the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, "Shisan wu' qi wozhou jiaoyu shiye gaige fazhan jishi" [Report on the reform and development of education in our prefecture during the "13th Five-Year Plan" period], December 15, 2020, available at: <http://www.gzz.gov.cn/gzzrmzf/c101413/202012/50e4339996fe4d92917721f69d0e40ae.shtml> (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913134626/http://www.gzz.gov.cn/gzzrmzf/c101413/202012/50e4339996fe4d92917721f69d0e40ae.shtml>. Based on the 2020 Ganzhi Statistical Yearbook, the percentage of Tibetans in Kardze is 83.77%, and the total student population (elementary through high school) is 178,056 (2020 Ganzhi Statistical Yearbook, p. 212 and p. 448).
- 102 Muli County paid 25.51 million yuan in boarding living allowance, benefiting 15,006 students of all nationalities. (Source: Muli County Government Office, "Muxian 2016 nian guomin jingji he shehui fazhan tongji gongbao" [2016 Statistical Communiqué on National Economic and Social Development of Muli County], March 20, 2017). According to the most recent source, Tibetans make up 33.2% of the population in Muli (Ch: Muli) (Source: Muli County Government Office, "Muli zangzu zizhixian jiben qingkuang" [Basic situation of Muli Tibetan Autonomous County], January 1, 2021, available at: [www.muli.gov.cn/zjml/rsm/201511/t20151104\\_762361.html](http://www.muli.gov.cn/zjml/rsm/201511/t20151104_762361.html) (accessed July 5, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210119210444/http://www.muli.gov.cn/zjml/rsm/201511/t20151104\\_762361.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20210119210444/http://www.muli.gov.cn/zjml/rsm/201511/t20151104_762361.html)). The number of Tibetan students in boarding schools is therefore estimated at 4,982.
- 103 The Gannan Prefecture Statistics Bureau reports that in 2020 the total number of boarding students is 58,901, representing 51% of the total student population of 115,499. The same report lists the percentage of Tibetans in the prefecture at 56.8% of the total prefectural population (Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture's 2020 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Communiqué, April 9, 2021, available at: <http://tjj.gnzmzf.gov.cn/info/1194/5660.htm> (accessed October 26, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20211026042220/http://tjj.gnzmzf.gov.cn/info/1194/5660.htm>).

- 104 In December 2020, Tibetans made up 30.31% of the population in Bairi (Ch: Tianzhu) (Source: "Tianzhu zangzu zizhixian" [Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County], Baidu Baike, available at: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%A4%A9%E7%A5%9E8%97%8F%E6%97%8F%E8%87%AA%E6%B2%BB%E5%8E%BF/8746531> (accessed July 8, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913141659/https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%A4%A9%E7%A5%9D%E8%97%8F%E6%97%8F%E8%87%AA%E6%B2%BB%E5%8E%BF/8746531>). Official sources put the student population (elementary, junior and senior high school) of Bairi in 2019 at 19,593 (Source: "2019 Tianzhu zangzu zizhixian guomin jingji he shehui fazhan tongji gongbao" [Statistical Communiqué on the National Economic and Social Development of Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in 2019], June 8, 2020, available at: [http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn/xxgk/xzfgbmxxgk/tjj/gkml\\_1354/qxxx\\_1360/202007/t20200701\\_1200000.html](http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn/xxgk/xzfgbmxxgk/tjj/gkml_1354/qxxx_1360/202007/t20200701_1200000.html) (accessed July 8, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210913142332/http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn/xxgk/xzfgbmxxgk/tjj/gkml\\_1354/qxxx\\_1360/202007/t20200701\\_1200000.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20210913142332/http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn/xxgk/xzfgbmxxgk/tjj/gkml_1354/qxxx_1360/202007/t20200701_1200000.html)). The number of Tibetan students is therefore estimated at 5,939. According to the county government, in 2011, 15330 (55.12%) of all students were boarding. (Source: Tianzhu County Government Office, June 3, 2016, available at: <https://www.jaoixu.com/20160603/4467355.html> (accessed November 21, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20211122120536/https://www.jaoixu.com/20160603/4467355.html>). We applied this 2011 data point to the total student number from 2019 to estimate the number of students boarding.
- 105 In 2020, Tibetans made up 36.18% of Dechen's total population. In 2019, 47% of all students in Yunnan were boarding (Source: Department of Education of Yunnan Province, "Yunnansheng 2019/2020 xuenianchu quansheng jiaoyu shiye fazhan tongji gongbao" [Statistical Bulletin of Yunnan Province's Educational Development at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year], March 25, 2020, available at: <https://jyt.yn.gov.cn/web/ac1f1eb64e6d4c36999869a47598935d/9d03708b61fc4b6b982355b4e1d8b8fd.html> (accessed May 28, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913142954/https://jyt.yn.gov.cn/web/ac1f1eb64e6d4c36999869a47598935d/9d03708b61fc4b6b982355b4e1d8b8fd.html>). After applying these percentages to the total number of students in Dechen, we arrived at an estimated 8,187 Tibetan students in boarding schools. **Note:** 47% is the percentage across all of Yunnan, but it is likely that Tibetans and minorities make up a higher percentage of boarding students.
- 106 This figure does not include Tibetan students in cities like Xining, Chengdu, or Beijing.



## IMPACTS OF THE COLONIAL BOARDING SCHOOL SYSTEM

A vast body of research has established that grave long-term and intergenerational harm is associated with attending residential school.<sup>107</sup> The experience of Tibetans cannot be fully assessed due to the strict controls placed on Tibet by the Chinese authorities. However, accounts from Tibetans in exile of life in earlier Tibetan boarding schools illustrate serious deprivation and abuse. Scholars from within Tibet and China have also documented high rates of mental and emotional distress in colonial boarding schools today, suggesting that students are likely to suffer long-term, adverse effects.

In interviews, Tibetans who attended early boarding schools in Tibet that were precursors to the current colonial boarding school system described the emotional challenge of being separated from their families and the psychological toll of bullying, beatings from teachers, regimented schedules, and poor living conditions.<sup>108</sup> One man who started colonial boarding school at age seven explained how teachers sometimes would not talk to him and other students, telling them they smelled bad because they only had one uniform to wear. He went on to describe other hardships and the effects he feels today:

The bullying that I faced from...seniors left me very afraid....My parents were old and couldn't come [to visit], my brother and sister were busy... That also left a huge emotional scar on me.

I think [attending colonial boarding school] affected me as a person. My family often told me that I have become like a Chinese person.<sup>109</sup>

One woman experienced constant fear and abuse over three years of junior high school:

There were rampant cases of rape, sexual harassment, beatings, bullying and theft in the dormitory. Random men climbed into the girls' dormitory at night...Many times, it was just random men and they were not even from school. It was not uncommon that a Chinese male teacher barged into the girls room, and raped or sexually assaulted the school girls. Day or night, we were not safe, constantly in fear of something happening to us. At that time, most of us were 11-13 years old. When the girls didn't comply, they were slapped and kicked. The Chinese male teachers used to call me in their chamber and inappropriately touched and sexually harassed me. I don't know how I survived it, my mother had already passed away then. I couldn't tell anybody what was happening to me.

107 In Canada, for example, a public health review study identified that the long-lasting effects of residential schools included "health problems, substance abuse, mortality/suicide rates, criminal activity, and disintegration of families and communities." The study noted that these impacts are experienced collectively, beyond the effect on individual Survivors. (Wilk, Piotr, Alana Maltby, and Martin Cooke. "Residential schools and the effects on Indigenous health and well-being in Canada—a scoping review." *Public health reviews* 38, no. 1 (2017): 2.)

108 See interviews in Appendix 3.

109 Testimony 3, see full text in Appendix 3.



Three years of my secondary school in the boarding school was a complete nightmare. It was physically, emotionally and psychologically tormenting and exhausting... I was so traumatized, all I could think or worry about was how to get away from bullying, beating, sexual harassment, or hunger.

– **Former Boarding School Student**



In a study of boarding students in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, two researchers named varying degrees of mental health problems, like apathy, anxiety, and interaction disorders. They pointed to the “semi-military and closed management” of boarding schools as a reason for students’ decreased capacity to engage with and understand the outside world, “resulting in a closed vision and narrow thinking....”

And the corporal punishment in school was unimaginable....When teachers were furious, they beat with anything like a chair, iron rod, sticks, etc., to the point of bleeding. The beatings were so severe and frequent that everyone had to live in constant fear.

Three years of my secondary school in the colonial boarding school was a complete nightmare. It was physically, emotionally, and psychologically tormenting and exhausting. I didn't have any sort of joy in learning, or the meaning of education.... I was just surviving. I was so traumatized, all I could think or worry about was how to get away from bullying, beating, sexual harassment, or hunger.<sup>110</sup>

Such testimonies highlight the conditions of physical, mental, and emotional stress and trauma that some students were forced to endure.

Tibetan researcher Huatse Gyal described how he absorbed a sense of inferiority while attending boarding school in the late 1990s:

Apart from teaching [Chinese and Tibetan], the school had a larger mission: to alter our fundamental values and minds. Through interactions with our teachers—Tibetans from the lowland farming areas who had recently graduated from Chinese universities—we came to realize that our bodies were not “clean” enough, that our speech was not “civilized” enough, and that we had to seek out a “better” life. Anything could be done to mold us into this ideal modern subject. Beating was more than acceptable; thus, the pain was constant....

Our teachers drove us to hate our heritage, our elders, and even our parents. As embodiments of the state, they were there to plant the sense in us that a good life was on the outside, and not in our communities. They were there to punish us for being the children of Tibetan nomads. We felt ashamed of our cultural background; we developed an antipathy to our socio-cultural world itself.<sup>111</sup>

Although academic research is limited, a number of scholars have documented the psychological and social harm that Tibetan students have experienced in the current boarding school system. In a study of boarding students in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, two researchers named varying degrees of mental health problems, like apathy, anxiety, and interaction disorders. They pointed to the “semi-military and closed management” of boarding schools as a reason for students’ decreased capacity to engage with and understand the outside world, “resulting in a closed vision and narrow thinking....”<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Testimony 1, see full text in Appendix 3.

<sup>111</sup> Gyal, Huatse, “Our Indigenous Land is Not a Wasteland,” American Ethnologist website, February 6, 2021, available at: <https://americanethnologist.org/features/reflections/our-indigenous-land-is-not-a-wasteland> (accessed November 15, 2021). See longer excerpt in Appendix 2.

<sup>112</sup> Xiaoping, Wang and Dengzhu, Zhaxi, “Zangqu jisuzhi xuexiao youxiao zhiru jiating jiaoyu celiu fenxi.” [An Analysis of Effectively Implanting Family Education Strategies in Boarding Schools in Tibetan Areas], *Industry and Information Technology Education* (2014): 89.

A survey-based study by Tibetan researcher Gazang Cao showed “alienation” in Tibetan adolescents attending rural colonial boarding schools in Qinghai. Cao used a random sample of 897 Tibetans attending Grades 7 to 12 at two schools. The questionnaire, as well as interviews with students, teachers, and administrators, revealed that more than one in three children were experiencing high levels of alienation.<sup>113</sup> Besides a sense of anguish or loss, adolescent alienation was said to describe an inability to connect in a meaningful way with others. In addition, the author cited academic research showing behavioral issues, substance abuse, and suicide as associated with high levels of alienation. “At the heart of alienation are powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, and social isolation/estrangement. Alienation has a dramatic impact on levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-direction.”<sup>114</sup>

A parent from a Tibetan area of Sichuan reflects on the costs of sending their young child to colonial boarding school:

For parents, it was mainly a challenge of not being able to let go of your child, but for the children themselves, it was a range of multiple challenges, from not being able to take care of themselves to having to endure others’ abuses and bullying, plus the suffering of being separated from parents at such a young age. When we weighed the overall cost and benefit of sending children to boarding schools, it became clear to me that the cost outweighed the benefits. It became particularly evident as children grow older [that] the costs are reflected in their behavior.<sup>115</sup>

Anecdotes and research from areas across Tibet point to a loss of family connection and support as factors in elevated levels of alienation, homesickness, and forms of physical or emotional distress. For example, in Sichuan, researchers Wang Xiaoping and Zhaxi Dengzhu documented that, due to distance and difficult travel, as many as 80% of Tibetan children do not return home during the school year (even for holidays), only meeting their parents halfway or staying with relatives or friends who live closer to the school.<sup>116</sup> At one school, children are only allowed three minutes a day to call home from a landline in a security guard’s office.<sup>117</sup> This lack of connection to home is further displayed in Qinghai by a school policy that requires children to turn in their cell phones while they are at the school, only getting them back for the monthly break.<sup>118</sup> One Qinghai teacher commented:

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113 Cao, “Alienation of Tibetan Adolescents in Rural Boarding Schools,” p. 503.

114 Cao, “Alienation of Tibetan Adolescents in Rural Boarding Schools,” p. 504

115 Source 5, see Appendix 1.

116 Wang, Zhaxi, “Zangqu jisuzhi xuexiao,” p. 89.

117 Fu Jingyi, “Sichuan Zangqu tansuo muqu jiaoyu: cong ‘you shu du’ dao ‘du hao shu’” [Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas Explore Pastoral Education: From “Having Access to Education” to “Enjoying Good Education”], June 9, 2015, available at: <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0609/c70731-27126607.html> (accessed June 8, 2021), *Internet Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210913144503/http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0609/c70731-27126607.html>.

118 Cao, Gazang, “Liudong, jisu yu guishu: zangzu qingshaonian yu jiating-shehui guanxi xianzhuang yanjiu” [Mobility, Boarding and Belonging: A Study on the Status Quo of Tibetan Youth and Family-Social Relations], *Qinghai Social Sciences* 4, (2019): 23.



When chatting with fifth grade children they will happily talk about how they're grazing the yaks at home and how, in summer, you can sit under the yak's belly to shelter from the rain. When talking about the various things at home, their faces are glowing with pride and happiness, but when talking about whether they miss home and their parents while at school, they seem shy, embarrassed, and frustrated.

Shut out of the school grounds, family members periodically tried to meet their children at a perimeter fence in order to bring them treats or daily necessities. However, this was discouraged by administrators and teachers, who told the children they would lose academic points if they went to the fence.

Nowadays, students have no one to talk to. In the past, if they were criticized by teachers, they would go home, [and] even if they didn't have parents...there would be elders, and they could release the unhappiness and stress of school in family conversations, and the next day would be a new day. But now boarding school students, without this outlet for family release, have been holding it in their psyche, and over time, they are developing illnesses.<sup>119</sup>

At a school in Tibet's capital of Lhasa, researcher Guo Tingting collected data from a questionnaire and held in-depth interviews with students from five regions of the TAR. The study determined that the level of homesickness and longing for parents and their traditional way of life was extremely high across grades, with students speaking specifically of missing Tibetan cultural staples like butter tea, tsampa, and grazing their yaks in the grasslands. The study went on to report:

When chatting with students and asking if they were homesick, 99% of the students would say that they miss home and their parents...Senior students also tell me very rationally that it's better to stay at home...When chatting with fifth grade children they will happily talk about how they're grazing the yaks at home and how, in summer, you can sit under the yak's belly to shelter from the rain. When talking about the various things at home, their faces are glowing with pride and happiness, but when talking about whether they miss home and their parents while at school, they seem shy, embarrassed, and frustrated.<sup>120</sup>

Guo went on to describe her observations of parents attempting to visit their children in Lhasa. Shut out of the school grounds, family members periodically tried to meet their children at a perimeter fence in order to bring them treats or daily necessities. However, this was discouraged by administrators and teachers, who told the children they would lose academic points if they went to the fence.<sup>121</sup>

I saw a little boy from second grade talking to a parent across the fence, looking back while talking, frowning, worried that the teacher on duty would catch him and deduct points...The students hurriedly took things from their parents and ran back. The expression on the little boy's face [indicated] that he wanted to cry....<sup>122</sup>

A girl in the fourth grade told me her parents did not come, I asked her if she wanted [her] parents to come? She replied that she didn't want them to come. She told her parents not to come to school because points would be deducted if they came to the school. "If the points [were] not deducted, [would] you want them to come?" She nodded while carrying on cleaning.<sup>123</sup>

119 Cao, Gazang, "Liudong, jisu yu guishu," p. 23.

120 Guo, Tingting, "Xizang nongcun jisuzhi xiaoxuesheng de qinggan xuqiu yanjiu" [A Study on the Emotional Needs of Rural Boarding School Pupils in Tibet] (MA Thesis, Southwest University, April 21, 2018) p. 51.

121 Guo, "Xizang nongcun jisuzhi xiaoxuesheng," p. 49.

122 Guo, "Xizang nongcun jisuzhi xiaoxuesheng," p. 49.

123 Guo, "Xizang nongcun jisuzhi xiaoxuesheng," p. 50.

Images taken from  
Guo Tingting's 2018  
thesis, "A Study on the  
Emotional Needs of  
Rural Boarding School  
Pupils in Tibet"



Tasked with writing in Chinese about things that had made them happy and sad, many fourth-year students in a colonial boarding school in Lhasa expressed their longing for home. Guo Tingting recorded the following answer given by one of the students:

星期一的时候我不开心因为我不能回家  
星期二我很开心因为我的班主任是一位漂亮的老师她很漂亮  
星期三我不开心因为我不能回家  
星期四我很开心因为我可以和同学们一起去看电视  
星期五我不开心因为我不能回家  
星期六我很开心因为我可以和同学们一起去看电影  
星期天我很开心因为我可以和同学们一起去看电影  
星期一我不开心因为我不能回家  
星期二我很开心因为我可以和同学们一起去看电影  
星期三我很开心因为我可以和同学们一起去看电影  
4-4  
2017年12月5日

*On Monday, I was unhappy because I had to leave home.*

*On Tuesday, I was happy because a new Chinese teacher came to our class and she was very pretty.*

*On Wednesday, I was unhappy because I missed home.*

*On Thursday, I was happy because I could go watch TV with the others.*

*On Friday, I was unhappy because Teacher Dhardon was sick.*

*On Saturday, I was really sad because my family didn't come to see me.*

*On Sunday, I was unhappy.*

*On Monday, I was unhappy as well.*

*On Tuesday, I was happy because I had mantou to eat.*

*On Wednesday, I was so happy because I could go home.<sup>124</sup>*

124 Fourth grader, cited in Guo, "Xizang nongcun jisuzhi xiaoxuesheng," p. 52.

At a Tibetan school in Qinghai, childcare workers are hired to teach the young children how to brush their hair and wash their faces since they cannot yet do such tasks on their own. According to state media, many students come to rely on these school employees for their physical and emotional needs, some even referring to them as “mother.”

The consequences of isolation and lack of family upbringing become even more devastating as the colonial boarding school system in Tibet grows to include younger and younger students. At a Tibetan school in Qinghai, childcare workers are hired to teach the young children how to brush their hair and wash their faces since they cannot yet do such tasks on their own. According to state media, many students come to rely on these school employees for their physical and emotional needs, some even referring to them as “mother.”<sup>125</sup> One worker explains: “The first-year students are still young. If they leave their parents and live with their classmates, they will inevitably experience a lot of discomfort.”<sup>126</sup> The potential long-term consequences at both the individual and societal level are deeply concerning.

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<sup>125</sup> Wang Mei, “Zangzu xuesheng Wanma Zhaxi: Xin xuexiao bi jiali hai yao hao” [Tibetan Student Pema Tashi: The New School is Even Better Than Home], January 2, 2014, available at: [http://www.humanrights.cn/cn/zt/tbbd/44/5/t20140102\\_1131293.htm](http://www.humanrights.cn/cn/zt/tbbd/44/5/t20140102_1131293.htm) (accessed July 15, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211124155539/http://www.humanrights.cn/cn/zt/tbbd/44/5/t20140102\\_1131293.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20211124155539/http://www.humanrights.cn/cn/zt/tbbd/44/5/t20140102_1131293.htm).

<sup>126</sup> Wang, “Zangzu xuesheng Wanma Zhaxi.”

## INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC LAW

China's boarding school system for Tibetan children constitutes a fundamental violation of the rights of parents and children to preserve their cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

China's colonial boarding school policies in Tibet violate multiple international human rights treaties, including those to which China is a party, as well as China's own domestic laws. In effect, China's boarding school system for Tibetan children constitutes a fundamental violation of the rights of parents and children to preserve their cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

Two core themes that are reiterated throughout international human rights law, including multiple international treaties that China has either ratified or at least signed, are the notions that children's best interests are protected when children are embedded within their families and that children have the right to family integrity without interference from the state. This results in the recognition that, except in cases of extreme abuse or neglect by parents, it is parents who must have primary authority over fundamental decisions involving their children, including what type of education they receive, which religion they practice, and how they are exposed to their own cultural heritage.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes the family as a unit entitled to protection from the state, both in general and in terms of parents' choice regarding their child's education. In general terms, Article 16(3) provides that "[t]he family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Article 26(3) of the UDHR further states that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."<sup>127</sup>

The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which China signed in 1997 and ratified in 2001,<sup>128</sup> reiterates this principle of parental agency in educational choice for their children. Article 13(3) notes that "[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."<sup>129</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which China signed in 1990 and ratified in 1992,<sup>130</sup> refers to the family as "the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children" and recognizes that a child "for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow

127 United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," December 10, 1948, available at:

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (accessed November 25, 2021).

128 UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, "UN Treaty Body Database," available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=36&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=36&Lang=EN) (accessed November 25, 2021).

129 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Article 13(3)," December 16, 1966, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cesr.aspx> (accessed November 25, 2021).

130 UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, "UN Treaty Body Database."

By compelling Tibetan parents to send their children to colonial boarding schools, including by removing any other options, Chinese authorities interfere with their right to preserve the integrity of their family units and strip them of their right to choose the educational direction of their children.

up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”<sup>131</sup> That same convention provides that “States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.”<sup>132</sup> Similar language is found throughout international human rights standards, including those specifically addressing educational matters.<sup>133</sup> By compelling Tibetan parents to send their children to colonial boarding schools, including by removing any other options, Chinese authorities interfere with their right to preserve the integrity of their family units and strip them of their right to choose the educational direction of their children.

Additionally, China’s colonial boarding school system and its increasing use of Chinese as the medium of instruction, as well as the way in which it alienates Tibetan children from their own cultural heritage, violates parents’ and children’s internationally enshrined rights with regard to linguistic and cultural choice and freedom. The CRC states that “a child belonging to a...minority...shall not be denied the right...to use his or her own language,”<sup>134</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), which China signed in 1998 (though has not ratified)<sup>135</sup> contains similar language.<sup>136</sup> As recently as 2020, in a communication to the Chinese government, a United Nations Committee (the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) raised concerns about the Chinese government’s replacement of Tibetan with the Chinese language as the medium of instruction in schools, and its persecution of Tibetan language rights advocates.<sup>137</sup> Over the past several decades,

131 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Convention on the Rights of the Child, preamble,” September 2, 1990, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (accessed November 25, 2021).

132 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 9.”

133 UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, “Convention Against Discrimination in Education, article 5(b),” December 14, 1960, available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12949&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12949&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) (accessed November 25, 2021).

134 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 30.”

135 United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies, “UN Treaty Body Database.”

136 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 27,” December 19, 1966, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> (accessed November 25, 2021).

137 UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, “Communication of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination dated 24 November 2020 to the government China,” available at: [https://tinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/CHN/INT\\_CERD\\_FUL\\_CHN\\_43684\\_E.pdf](https://tinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/CHN/INT_CERD_FUL_CHN_43684_E.pdf) (accessed November 25, 2021).



other UN Committees have expressed similar concerns.<sup>138</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child also notes that states have an obligation “to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations...”

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has explained that the right to take part in cultural life means that the state must abstain from both “interference with the exercise of cultural practices and [interference] with access to cultural goods and services” and that this right is recognized in multiple human rights declarations. These include the UDHR, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as multiple human rights treaties that China has signed and ratified, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).<sup>139</sup> The CESCR added that this right is “intrinsically linked” to the right to education “through which individuals and communities pass on their values, religion, customs, language and other cultural references.” The CRC also notes that states have an obligation “to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.”<sup>140</sup> By interfering in Tibetan children’s participation in their families’ and communities’ cultural lives and practices and by exposing them only to a CCP-approved version of Tibetan culture, the Chinese government is in violation of Tibetan children’s internationally enshrined rights.

The manner in which China’s colonial boarding schools stifle Tibetan children’s freedom to participate in religious practices and traditions violates both the children’s and their parents’ rights as set forth in Article 18(4) of the CCPR, which China has signed though not ratified,<sup>141</sup> and which notes that “[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.” The same convention provides that everyone shall not only have the right to freely choose their religion but to “manifest [their] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” As noted above, the CESCR and various other conventions and declarations similarly protect these rights.

138 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “Concluding observations on the second periodic report of China, including Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, paragraph 36,” June 13, 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53c77e524.html> (accessed November 25, 2021); UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions), adopted by the Committee at its sixty-fourth session (16 September – 4 October 2013),” October 4, 2013, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5263de9d4.html> (accessed November 25, 2021); UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: China” June 7, 1996, available at: s (accessed December 6, 2021).

139 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General comment no. 21, Right of everyone to take part in cultural life (art. 15, para. 1a of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), December 21, 2009, E/C.12/GC/21, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ed35bae2.html>

140 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 8.”

141 Human Rights in China, “UN Treaty Bodies and China,” available at: <https://www.hrichina.org/en/un-treaty-bodies-and-china> (accessed November 25, 2021).

The colonial boarding school system in Tibet also violates domestic Chinese law. China's own Constitution and statutes provide express protections to Tibetans' language rights, and do so specifically within the context of education. The Chinese Constitution states that "[a]ll nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs."<sup>142</sup> The 1984 *Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy* (Article 37) further provides that "[s]chools (classes) and other educational organizations recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages *as the media of instruction*"<sup>143</sup> (emphasis added).

Moreover, the *Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* notes in its general provisions that "[a]ll nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. The spoken and written languages of the ethnic peoples shall be used in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional National Autonomy and other laws" (Article 8). While it later requires all schools to use Mandarin and standard written Chinese as the language of instruction, this is only "*unless otherwise provided by law*" (emphasis added) (Article 10).<sup>144</sup> The *Education Law* provides for the exception to that general requirement by specifically stating that at ethnic minority schools, "the spoken and written language used by the specific ethnic group or commonly used by the local ethnic groups may be used *for instruction*" (emphasis added) (Article 12).<sup>145</sup> The Chinese government's so-called "bilingual education policy" – especially in the context of the coercive colonial boarding school system – thus constitutes a violation of China's own system of laws.

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142 The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, "Constitution of the People's Republic of China, article 4," available at: [http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Constitution/node\\_2825.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm) (accessed November 25, 2021).

143 Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China," available at: <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/regional-ethnic-autonomy-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-amended> (accessed November 25, 2021).

144 National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language," October 31, 2000, available at: [http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content\\_1383540.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content_1383540.htm) (accessed November 25, 2021).

145 National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, "Education Law of the People's Republic of China," March 18, 1995, available at: [http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/12/content\\_1383710.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/12/content_1383710.htm) (accessed November 25, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

More than three-quarters of school-age Tibetan children are now living separated from their families in Chinese state-run colonial boarding schools across Tibet, or what China designates as the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and Counties outside of it. By closing local village schools, eliminating non-state schooling options that would allow children to stay at home, and, in some instances, directly forcing parents to send their children away, the Chinese government is not only disconnecting entire generations of Tibetans from their families and communities, but also alienating them from their distinct religion, language, and culture. This is part of a deliberate effort by the state to eliminate the core of Tibetan identity and replace it with a hollowed-out version compatible with the Party's aims – one that is politically loyal to the CCP and that complies with the Party's idea of a homogenous Chinese people. Other elements of this ambitious project are well-known, such as China's plans to install a fake reincarnation of the Dalai Lama outside the bounds of traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice, and its removal of Tibetan nomads from their ancestral grasslands. However, the colonial boarding school system – perhaps one of the most insidious aspects of the project – has largely escaped international attention until now.

The Chinese government is violating international human rights law as well as its domestic laws by coercing Tibetan parents to send their children to colonial boarding school. Beijing is denying these children their fundamental right to live with their families, to practice their religion and culture, and to speak and learn in their own language. It is well established that young children learn best when in the loving care of their own families and when educated in their mother-tongue, but Tibetan children today are being raised apart from their families and immersed in a politicized curriculum taught in Chinese. Many of these children are enduring emotional and psychological harm as a result of this policy.

The discovery of more than a thousand unmarked graves of Indigenous children at former residential school sites in Canada has catalyzed a deeper reckoning with the long-term effects of these state-backed institutions in Canada and the United States, and drawn condemnation from the international community. It is incumbent upon all countries to ensure that this legacy of forced assimilation by national governments in historical colonial boarding school systems is not replicated in Tibet. Therefore, it is imperative that governments join together to call for an end to China's present-day colonial boarding school system across Tibet.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### TO THE UNITED NATIONS

- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should exercise her independent monitoring and reporting mandate to collect information – including reports that Tibetan parents were coerced to send their children to colonial boarding schools – speak out publicly on her findings, prepare reports on the human rights situation in Tibet, and keep the Human Rights Council regularly informed;
- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should urgently visit Tibet and ensure immediate, meaningful, and unfettered access to investigate the situation of Tibetan children in China's state-run colonial boarding schools; and
- The United Nations Human Rights Council should act on the recommendations made in the joint statement by the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council on June 26, 2020, *"UN experts call for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China,"* and take all appropriate measures to monitor Chinese human rights practices, including in Tibet (both inside and outside the Tibet Autonomous Region).

### TO UN MEMBER STATES AND AGENCIES

UN Member States and Agencies should urge the Government of China to:

- Allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures immediate, meaningful, and unfettered access to Tibet and ensure they are granted access to colonial boarding schools;
- Ensure that the best interest of the child is taken into account as a primary consideration in all decisions concerning Tibetan children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Priorities should include protection of every child's right to: 1) privacy; 2) a family environment; 3) education; and 4) physical and mental health;
- Provide reliable data on the exact number of Tibetan children currently enrolled in China's colonial boarding schools;
- Reverse the deceptively-named "bilingual education" policy that replaces Tibetan with Chinese as the medium of instruction and ensure that all Tibetan children are able to use Tibetan in every aspect of their schooling;
- Hire and train greater numbers of qualified Tibetan teachers in Tibetan areas, especially in rural communities, and halt their displacement by Chinese teachers, to ensure that Tibetan students have access to high quality education in the Tibetan language and in their home communities, without being separated from their families;

- Halt the use of state propaganda, political ideology, and indoctrination at all levels of the school curricula and ensure that Tibetan students are permitted to learn about their own history, culture, and religion; and
- Uphold in a timely manner its reporting obligations to the UN treaty bodies, including by submitting its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has been overdue since March 31, 2019.

#### TO CONCERNED GOVERNMENTS

In coordinated bilateral or multilateral action, governments should:

- Urgently express serious concern at all levels about China's state-run colonial boarding school system in Tibet and call on the Government of China to halt the implementation of the colonial boarding school system;
- Call on the Government of China, and in particular on the National People's Congress Standing Committee of China, to uphold and enforce the current constitutional and statutory protections for Tibetan language promotion and preservation and to condemn any effort to erode laws protecting the use of minority languages in the education context;
- Impose targeted sanctions on Chinese officials, including the Provincial Party Secretaries and heads of government bodies overseeing the colonial boarding school system, under the U.S. Global Magnitsky Act, the E.U. Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, and other human rights sanctions regimes in place in Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, and review the use of other punitive measures available; these sanctions will be more effective if pursued collectively; and
- Underwrite programs by Tibetans around the world to promote and preserve Tibetan language and culture.

## APPENDIX 1: STATEMENTS FROM TIBETANS ON CURRENT COLONIAL BOARDING SCHOOL SYSTEM

*The testimonies and comments here were gathered by several researchers over the course of 2020 and 2021. Some conversations or comments took place before this report was underway, and others were collected specifically for the report. All identifying information for those in Tibet has been withheld because of the extreme risk to their safety.*

### SOURCE 1

*Confidential conversations with a Tibetan in Amdo (Qinghai), 2021*

I know of children aged four to five who don't want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother's laps, begging not to be sent away and even refusing to go back. Both the children and the parents are unwilling. The sudden change in the environment has a serious impact on the children's physical and mental wellbeing. It takes a lot of time to get used to food that is provided in the schools and this has led to malnutrition and serious health problems. The school clinics don't look after the children unless it is deemed urgent and important enough. Such negligence leads to long-term health issues as many seasonal illnesses or contagious diseases often go untreated.

Parents are coerced to send their children to boarding schools. Despite not wanting to send them, most of the parents do not have a choice as it is mandatory. The age might differ slightly from area to area, but when you reach a certain age, the family has to send [their child], otherwise there will be a penalty where they must pay monetary compensation for not sending their child. There are also instances where the local authorities have told families that if they don't send their children to boarding kindergarten schools, then they would not be allowed to enroll in elementary or primary school.

Usually at the beginning of the year or the new academic year, the local authorities and relevant departments hold a meeting where they check the household registration of each family. From that, they know how many children each family has and their age. From the age of four, the local officials tell the family it is mandatory to send the children to boarding schools and if families do not comply, they are asked to pay a fine. Sometimes the officials tell the families that if they don't send their [first] child to boarding school, then their second or third child will never be allowed to enroll. With [these] different methods, they are coercing the family to comply. So, usually out of fear, the family sends their children to boarding schools.

**SOURCE 2**

*Summary of an audio recording by a Tibetan in Amdo (Qinghai), 2020*

The authorities keep coming back to give the community lectures on the need to send their children to the [boarding] schools for Grades 1-3. Two heads from the township, an education head from the county, as well as around six police officers attended. They said:

“In other townships the community is being squeezed [pressured] to send their children to the schools, but we don't have to do that here. Today is the last day we will come. If we have to come back tomorrow, it won't be good.

Some people are misrepresenting the policy, if you do that it won't be good. Moving forward you have to take responsibility. You have been discussing on WeChat, we have heard about this, and if you don't listen [to us] we will squeeze [pressure] you one by one, that is easy for us to do.

If you continue to choose not to acknowledge this policy and refuse to send your children to the schools, we will consider this to be a protest from you. If you stay like this, we will consider it to be like a silent protest.

In general when it comes to education, in our county there are many education projects coming from the province. If you don't listen you will ruin all those future plans. You will be held responsible for that.”

**SOURCE 3**

*Confidential statement from a Tibetan monk in India originally from Kardze, Kham (Chinese: Ganzi, Sichuan), 2021*

The families are coerced to send their children to schools, and they are often discouraged from sending their children to private schools which usually have better facilities and also some environment of Tibetanness. So, they are forced to send their children to state-run schools. At the village level, there is an increasing number of kindergartens where little children between the ages of two to four get enrolled, but it's only day school. Most of the families send their children to these kindergartens. Boarding school starts from age six to seven and when children are in their first standard of the primary school, they can come back home but again from second standard and above, they have to stay at school except during vacation.

There is rarely anybody who doesn't send their child to school these days, there is an increasing sense of competition amongst the families. Even during the two month summer and winter vacations, those families who can afford it hire tutors for their children and send them to tuition classes. They are often encouraged to send their children to the public schools and discouraged to send in private schools as some of these private schools are run by monasteries or some Rinpoches [incarnate Buddhist lamas] (they also have opportunity to learn Tibetan in these Tibetan private schools). If you go to the Chinese-run schools, your

Chinese and English become good but your Tibetan becomes weak. If you go to the schools run by monasteries you can be good at all three.

#### SOURCE 4

*Confidential conversation with a Tibetan in Amdo (Qinghai), 2021*

In the past few years, [name removed] Prefecture and [name removed] Prefecture in Qinghai Province have started boarding for elementary schools. The boarding for middle schools has been available [for many years]. In [name removed], from 2020 they were strictly ordered to send their children to boarding for elementary school. As of now, the children as young as class one students (six years old) are in boarding school. One of the [name removed] boarding schools that I know of has about 850 students.

In every village, there is a complete education school up to class six. In 2020 in [name removed] County, the authorities converted these schools to nursery schools and prohibited children from studying in their own village. The families are forced to send their children to schools in cities now. And since there are no facilities for school buses, the parents and children face difficulties dropping and picking their children, but they continue to do so. Tibetans in [name removed] Prefecture go through the same difficulty.

#### SOURCE 5

*Confidential statement from a Tibetan in Sichuan, 2021*

I am from [location removed]. My only son was sent to state-run boarding school at age seven. Looking back at that moment, my heart still hurts. It was the first day of fall semester in 2006, when I was about to leave for home after moving him into the boarding school, when he came to me with an extremely sad face and tears started rolling down his cheeks. He started murmuring that he did not want to stay. It was such an emotional torture for me to leave my only son in boarding school. I can't even think of how miserable I felt at that time.

As weeks turned into months and months into years, my son reached third grade and was able to take care of himself a lot better. At that time, my wife and I both strongly believed that without proper education, it would be very hard for my son to be able to lead a good life, so we made the decision with heavy hearts. In the meantime, we also talked with other parents who were in similar hardship and tried to talk to government officials but all our effort was in vain.

It's not just my family that endured such a difficult experience; there were many others who went through similar challenges. For parents, it was mainly a challenge of not being able to let go of your child, but for the children themselves, it was a range of multiple challenges, from not being able to take care of themselves to having to endure others' abuses and bullying, plus the suffering of being separated from parents at such a young age. When we weighed the overall cost and benefit of sending children to boarding schools, it became clear to me that the cost outweighed the benefits. It became particularly evident as children grow older [that] the costs are reflected in their behavior.



**SOURCE 6**

*Confidential statement from a Tibetan in India originally from Kardze, Kham  
(Chinese: Ganzi, Sichuan), 2021*

One serious problem/narrative coming from Tibet in recent days...is that the purpose of the colonial boarding school system is “to root out Tibetan identity and reproduce in Chinese characteristics.” In this process of cultural and psychological erasure, the children are treated as a consumable commodity and undergo a series of physical and psychological abuse. Physical torture such as sexual molestation and beating by the teachers and school managers have been ongoing silent practices and have caused many children to experience enduring mental traumas. The psychological torture includes spiritual abuse by cutting the connection with their religious and other tradition-based practices while forcefully introducing Chinese value systems. As a means to escape such an abusive environment, many cases of substance abuse and suicide attempts among the children in the Kardze regions have been reported in recent years.

In the early 2000s, every child from a village was asked to attend either colonial boarding schools or local day schools for at least two years in Kardze. However, in recent years since 2012, the duration of schooling has been extended and [it has been] mandated [that children must] attend colonial boarding school. For instance, in Kardze regions alone, the students were forced to stay in colonial boarding school until they graduated from high school, and such polic[ies] ensured their forceful stays in colonial boarding school for more than seven to eight years in total.

Boarding school enrollment is not [optional] and it is more of [a] systematic enforcement than explicit coercive actions. Tibetan families who refuse to send their children to colonial boarding schools are deprived of or cut off their rights to government support systems such as health care, the right to register in any school, and the right to receive national identity cards (which means seizing citizenship rights) which are required for every activity such as banking, receiving essential licenses and inner-movement permission from one place to another. Such enforcement has been a more powerful tool than direct threat and punishment.

Boarding schools established in Tibet [are] based on systematic discrimination. The nature and explicit purpose of teaching in the schools have been more colonizing disempowerment than educational empowerment. Children are often taught to embrace Chinese values and look down at their language and cultural roots. One who speaks [a] local dialect and embraces their faith system is ashamed of and looked down on.

**ONLINE COMMENTER 1 (2021)**

In [my area] it is mandatory to send children aged four and above to boarding schools. Most of these children are from nomadic backgrounds. Usually there are very few Tibetan teachers; the majority are Chinese. So teachers only speak in Mandarin and conduct all school curriculum in Mandarin, including nursery rhymes and bedtime stories.

When they join primary school at age seven, hardly any of them can speak Tibetan. At the primary school, they appoint only Chinese teachers as the main class teacher and prioritise Chinese as the main language. Even the parents give more importance to the Mandarin, e.g., they tell children to finish the Mandarin homework first and they will be favoured by the head teacher. In this way, children lose interest in learning Tibetan and this is the status of our language today.

#### **ONLINE COMMENTER 2 (2021)**

True, compared to earlier, the [enrollment] age for boarding school is much younger now. One of the reasons is probably that it has become a part of the regulations of the public [government] schools....If we look at it from another angle, it is part of surviving in the competitive nature of society today, to be able to compete with other children. If we don't have our Tibetan children in school at an early age, there is a fear of falling behind. Either way it is not good for us.

## APPENDIX 2: STATEMENTS DRAWN FROM SECONDARY SOURCES

**Statement 1: Excerpts of Human Rights Watch Interview with a Former Part-Time Teacher from Lhasa, TAR<sup>146</sup>**

### *Part 1, 2015*

Yes, “education villages” – *jiayucun* – are being set up. These are boarding schools, sometimes primary and almost always middle schools. There are *xianxiao* or county primary schools now, and they will have the children with most confidence in Chinese. But some, especially *xiang* [township] schools, will have terrible conditions and be a long way from home, so it’s not easy for the children to go home. The new education “village” or compound in Lhasa, near Tselgungthang [about half a mile from Lhasa, to the southwest on the south side of the river], is a kind of showcase. Yes, once it opens and the schools are all moved from the city to the new compound, children will only get to go home every two weeks usually. They’ll be boarders from Lhasa boarding within Lhasa, basically.

### *Part 2, 2017*

From our village, it’s just outside Lhasa, in [name withheld] county, they go for middle school and high school to a place near Lhasa, they board there. It would take about an hour to drive there. There is a primary school in [name withheld] township, it’s about a 20-minute drive. They don’t walk there anymore, not with all the traffic nowadays. It’s the township, the pre-school there is combined for several villages. That’s where they teach Chinese language, in that kindergarten. The kids from there can speak such fluent Chinese. For their grandparents, it’s really worrisome, but for their parents, many of whom I taught, they were drop-outs from school, they are very lost. Their grandparents are a bit older than my parents, their parents are illiterate, and are looked down upon, they didn’t receive a good standard education like the city kids get. But their kids are not willing any more to work on the farm.

These students who have stayed in school for a few years imagine that they are going to get a government job in the end, they won’t have to work on the land, and they look down on their parents. They’re close to the city and they lose their identity. And when they get to exam for middle school, then 90 percent of them fail and that’s the end of it. They go to work on construction sites, or do anything, nothing. They might lose contact with the family back in the village....

[Older] people always complain about the lack of Tibetan, the fact that their grandkids cannot speak proper Tibetan at home. And the kids feel more themselves, more comfortable, if we talk to them in Tibetan. They feel lost in Chinese-medium teaching.

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146 Human Rights Watch, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet,” pp. 94-95.

**Statement 2: Excerpt from “Our Indigenous Land is Not a Wasteland” by Huatse Gyal<sup>147</sup>**

In 1997, the local government built a boarding school in my nomadic pastoral village. Based on a lottery, I was one of seven students recruited by the school for its inaugural class. Most families in the village were against sending their children to the school. As a result, they had to pay heavy monetary fines. The school itself only offered hot water and steamed bread for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Thanks to our mother-like yaks, we grew up consuming yak yogurt, yak butter, and milk. The temperature in the sparse concrete building sank to below twenty degrees Fahrenheit (-7 Celsius) in the winter. All the students had cracks on their hands and feet; our cheeks were mostly red. The teachers instructed us in both Chinese and Tibetan.

Apart from teaching these subjects, the school had a larger mission: to alter our fundamental values and minds. Through interactions with our teachers—Tibetans from the lowland farming areas who had recently graduated from Chinese universities—we came to realize that our bodies were not “clean” enough, that our speech was not “civilized” enough, and that we had to seek out a “better” life. Anything could be done to mold us into this ideal modern subject. Beating was more than acceptable; thus, the pain was constant. One’s freezing hands getting hit with a bamboo stick is truly the worst. As Tibetans say, “Pain may get old, but one never forgets it.”

“If you don’t want to lead the backward lives of your parents, study hard”; “If you don’t study hard, you will be nothing but a stupid nomad.” Our teachers drove us to hate our heritage, our elders, and even our parents. As embodiments of the state, they were there to plant the sense in us that a good life was on the outside, and not in our communities. They were there to punish us for being the children of Tibetan nomads. We felt ashamed of our cultural background; we developed an antipathy to our socio-cultural world itself.

**Statement 3: Teacher at a Colonial Boarding School in Mili (Chinese: Muli) Tibetan Autonomous County<sup>148</sup>**

“First of all, the quality of our education here is definitely not comparable to that of many Han areas. There are many reasons for this. In addition to the poor quality of personnel and material conditions that people talk about, there is also a very important reason that many students’ families believe in religion. The most typical are the Tibetan and Mongolian students, almost all the members of these two ethnic groups believe in Tibetan Buddhism. Some students even take time off during the semester to go home to participate in religious activities. Because of this problem, we communicated with the parents of the students many times but to no avail. Not only did they not listen to us, they also had some complaints against us. This was very troubling for us. Anyway, we do not agree with students participating in such religious activities. In my opinion, these are feudal and superstitious activities which not only affect learning but also do not benefit the long-term physical and mental development

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147 Gyal, Huatse, 2021. “Our Indigenous Land is Not a Wasteland.”

148 Cited in Xu Jianhua, “Duo Minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhong de minzu wenhua guanzhao wenti yanjiu,” p. 29.

of students. Because of this problem, we have approached the cadres in the village many times and asked them to persuade the parents of the students with us. In addition, our school stipulates that as long as there are students who take a leave of absence on the pretext of going home to participate in religious activities, we generally do not give approval. Some parents listened to us after persuasion, some were unhappy, and even came to school to pick up their children, and some students went back to participate as usual under the excuse of taking sick leave and so on. In general, the series of measures we have taken have not had much effect.”

**Observation 1: Excerpts from He Nengkun's 2012 PhD Thesis, including Statements made by a Principal of a Colonial Boarding School in the Tibet Autonomous Region, Parents, and Students**

For example, when there are major religious activities in the area, students always find ways to participate. Whenever encountering major religious activities, the school faces the phenomenon of a large number of students skipping school. According to a principal, in order to prevent students' participation in religious activities from affecting regular classes, in addition to strengthening precautions and guarding against [such behaviour], they also assign personnel to stand at the intersections the students must pass through to intercept them, and then send them back to the school by car.<sup>149</sup>

[...]

Because children and their parents spend less time together, the opportunity to communicate with their parents is significantly reduced, and the parent-child relationship is greatly affected. Many of the students' characters, values, and labor skills cannot depend on modern school education, but can only depend on learning from their parents' example when they get together with their children or the influence of the environment. It may be a religious ceremony, or a family experience, a major event, etc. Students have a short time at home and a long time at school. They often find it difficult to communicate with their parents after returning after a long time. As a result, parents form a negative mentality that it is difficult to raise their children and the resulting resistance to school education is affecting parents' decisions on whether to let their children go to school. Some parents said that before going to school, they looked like Tibetan children and were easy to raise. Once they go to school, they don't listen to what their parents say, and they lack understanding for many important aspects of daily life, and they become less and less like Tibetans.<sup>150</sup>

[...]

Some children who cannot go home for various reasons during the monthly vacation cannot bear the loneliness and fear of the dormitory, so they came up with the idea to put quilts and

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149 He Nengkun, “Xizang Nongmuqu jiaoyu tiaoshi yanjiu,” p. 94.

150 He Nengkun, “Xizang Nongmuqu jiaoyu tiaoshi yanjiu,” p. 135.

blankets directly on the floor and sleep together. Whenever school is over, some children see the parents of other students come to pick them up while their own don't come and they get this lonely look on their face. During my interviews, many students expressed a feeling of "I just miss home, I'm afraid of staying at school." They should enjoy family affection at home, enjoy the affection of their parents, enjoy the care of their older brothers and sisters, and enjoy the carefree childhood life in nature, but today's education system lets them sacrifice all this to a certain extent.<sup>151</sup>

[...]

A little Lama named Tashi, who had studied at middle school for a while, told me that he prefers to be in the monastery. Compared with school, the monastery has no language barriers, life barriers, or understanding barriers, no psychological barriers to communicate with teachers of other ethnic groups, no difficult homework, students are seldom criticized, and you can go home whenever you want. In short, life in the monastery is joyful and happy. I'm unable to investigate the specific details of monastery education in detail, but the fact that the children are willing to stay indicates that the monastery is attractive to children.<sup>152</sup>

**Observation 2: By the Deputy Director of the Bureau of Education of Ngari Prefecture Regarding Mandated All-Chinese Textbooks<sup>153</sup>**

*Regarding Tibetan elementary school students in Ngari using the "Language" textbook:*

The content of some texts has relatively few Tibetan cultural features, and the proportion of local features from Tibet is insufficient. For example, the traditional cultural content in the texts such as "Dragon Boat Festival Zongzi" and the "Surname Song" are all Han Chinese traditions, there's a certain difficulty for Tibetan elementary school students to understand them. It takes a long time to explain the background of the text and the meaning of the words.(...)

In its content design, the textbook compiled by the Ministry focuses on students' literacy and handwriting ability. It arranges for Chinese characters to be taught first and then Pinyin, while traditionally, Chinese textbooks have put Pinyin first and Chinese characters second. For Tibetan students who are rarely exposed to Chinese, especially those from pastoral areas, it is extremely strenuous to learn [that way].

*Regarding Tibetan elementary and junior high school students in Ngari using the "History" textbook:*

The rare characters have no Pinyin and explanation. For the students in Ngari who have

151 He Nengkun, "Xizang Nongmuqu jiaoyu tiaoshi yanjiu," p. 134.

152 He Nengkun, "Xizang Nongmuqu jiaoyu tiaoshi yanjiu," p. 171.

153 Yang Liu, "Ali diqu yiwu jiaoyu tongbian 'san ke' jiaocai shiyong qingkuang diaocha yu fenxi" [Investigation and Analysis of the Use of the Centralized Compiled "Three Subjects" Teaching Materials for Compulsory Education in Ngari Prefecture], *Xizang Jiaoyu* 9 (2020) pp. 6-7.

relatively poor Chinese skills, the classic stories and classical Chinese materials in the textbooks are also very difficult to understand. The process of learning history still shows that there exists a certain gap in the language learning of the students in Ngari.

**Examples of Mandated Textbooks: TAR Elementary Schools & Two Years of Junior High<sup>154</sup>**



"Morality and the Rule of Law,"  
1st grade textbook, 2016 ed.,  
People's Education Press.



"Language" [i.e., Chinese],  
1st grade textbook, 2016 ed.,  
People's Education Press.



"Chinese History,"  
7th grade textbook, 2016 ed.,  
People's Education Press.



Lesson 1 "I am Chinese," taken from the 1st grade textbook  
"Language," 2016 ed., People's Education Press.

<sup>154</sup> Fang Fengwen et al, "Xizang jiaoyu jingzhun fupin tuopin de jingyan yu kunnan fenxi" [An Analysis of the Experiences and Difficulties in Tibetan Education Precision Poverty Alleviation], thepaper.cn, September 16, 2019, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_4434666](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_4434666) (accessed June 26, 2021), *Internet Archive*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20211126151623/https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_4434666](https://web.archive.org/web/20211126151623/https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_4434666).

## APPENDIX 3: TESTIMONIES FROM FORMER TIBETAN BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS

Our researchers spoke to a small number of Tibetans in exile who attended early boarding schools in Tibet. Dates of attendance ranged from 1986 to 2009. Although just a small sample, these accounts offer a glimpse into life at these schools, which were the foundation for the colonial boarding school system that has developed in the past decade.

### Testimony 1 (Interview, 2021)

*Attended Boarding School in Badzong County, Tsolho Prefecture, Amdo (Chinese: Tongde County, Hainan Prefecture, Qinghai)*

[At my secondary school in the 1990s] living conditions were extremely poor with a bare minimum of food. We had to manage with small portions for three meals a day, which was nowhere near enough to fill the stomach. It was so poor that many students often stole food or rations from the school storeroom or surrounding areas. Whenever that happened, either the students involved were suspended from school or severely beaten. Water was very scarce, including the drinking water. Girls had to go out from the school compound to fetch water from far away for drinking and other daily needs. We bathed only once or twice a month.

There was no education or facility on health and hygiene, and the school was least bothered about it. The seasonal flu and other contagious diseases like conjunctivitis (pink eye) spread fast and went unattended most of the time. Once I suffered this eye infection, and it got so bad. My vision got blurred and stayed that way for so long. Almost everyone had lice on their clothes and hair.

There was zero safety for women in the dormitory or generally in school. There were rampant cases of rape, sexual harassment, beatings, bullying, and theft in the dormitory. Random men climbed into the girls' dormitory at night. There was no electricity. Many times, it was just random men and they were not even from school. It was not uncommon that a Chinese male teacher barged into the girls room, and raped or sexually assaulted the school girls. Day or night, we were not safe, constantly in fear of something happening to us. At that time, most of us were 11-13 years old. When the girls didn't comply, they were slapped and kicked. The Chinese male teachers used to call me in their chamber and inappropriately touched and sexually harassed me. I don't know how I survived it, my mother had already passed away then. I couldn't tell anybody what was happening to me.

And the corporal punishment in school was unimaginable. Though, I myself didn't get much beating as my Mandarin was fairly good compared to other students who were from remote places or had no Mandarin background. When teachers were furious, they beat with anything like a chair, iron rod, sticks, etc., to the point of bleeding. The beatings were so severe and frequent that everyone had to live in constant fear.



Three years of my secondary school in the boarding school was a complete nightmare. It was physically, emotionally, and psychologically tormenting and exhausting. I didn't have any sort of joy in learning, or the meaning of education. I am sure that I didn't learn anything either. I was just surviving. I was so traumatized, all I could think or worry about was how to get away from bullying, beating, sexual harassment, or hunger....

[Later] my son attended boarding school for two years....The general facilities and living conditions, it seems there wasn't much improvement. Some of the vegetables, he doesn't even want to taste now as he said it brings back the bad memory of those days. Even the corporal punishment, in his school, he was once caught for smoking, and his teacher pushed a whole pack of cigarettes into his mouth. For another student, this Chinese teacher put a whole packet of cigarettes in a cup of water and made him drink it...

Their class schedule is inhuman, they have class from morning 7 to 9 at night. No time for rest, no time for play. Three times a meal break and half an hour or an hour of self study time. It was rigorous and regressive and repelled them from studying. If today I tell him to study, he literally begs me, he said it reminds him of his time in boarding school, how he never got time to rest or think. He was in a county level boarding school [Triga County, Tsolho Prefecture, Qinghai] for 2013 and 2014.

## Testimony 2

*Attended Boarding School in Chapcha County, Tsolho Prefecture, Amdo (Chinese: Gonghe County, Hainan Prefecture, Qinghai)*

### *Part 1 (Excerpt of a Written Article, 2020)*

When I was studying in middle school in Chapcha, Domey (Amdo), I had three friends who were 14 years old, and we were classmates too. One night while we were sleeping in the boarding school dormitory, we were choked by carbon monoxide. My three classmates were killed. The real experience of fear and panic about the boarding school remains in my heart.

### *Part 2 (Interview, 2021)*

I attended Serchen Dzong Nationality School from 1986-1989....When I think back to boarding school, I have a bad feeling about it. It has left a sad impression, a feeling of never wanting to go back to school. [I understand now that] its main purpose is to dilute the Tibetan way of living, scatter Tibetans, and in the long run, destroy the language, culture, traditions, etc.

The living conditions were extremely poor with a lack of facilities. Poor sanitation facilities, poor food, no hygiene, no safety and security, no hot water facility. We had to bring our own stove to heat ourselves, and fetch water from outside.

The school didn't provide enough food, so we had to spend our own money and buy rations - in one kitchen they had to make food for around 200 people, so it was not enough. We had to bring our own mattress, quilt, bed sheets, etc.

There was no freedom to do anything. The schedule was planned from 6am to 10pm. There was no free time. We were not allowed to leave the school grounds.

There were extreme beatings and all.

Before joining the boarding school, I had a huge interest in music and singing, I was outspoken. But after joining boarding school, due to so many regulations and restrictions, I became timid and introverted.

### **Testimony 3**

*Attended Boarding School in Markham county, Chamdo Prefecture, Kham (Chinese: Mangkang County, Changdu Prefecture, TAR)*

#### *Part 1 (Written Account, 2021)*

I was born in a small village of Markham. Children from my village were sent to boarding schools in Gatho which is 300 kilometres [186 miles] away from the village I was born in...I was sent to primary boarding school for five years from 2000-2005. On weekends, we were not allowed to go home....

In 2000, there was no dormitory when I got to school....But fortunately or unfortunately, we got a newly built dormitory after waiting more than seven months....There was no canteen or separate kitchen for us after we were admitted to the school dormitory but they called some men from the village to cook for us....They would cook for us at the corner of the school playground. The school director asked them to get donations from local villagers and buy all the necessary things....

One thing that I still regret is that I wasted so much time in the boarding school. We were not allowed to attend regular classes and we had to go out to plant trees, harvest radish, clean the water tank and drainage of the school. We didn't have good teachers and teachers would intentionally miss our class when they knew that it was our class because our parents were not with us and they had no idea what was going on in the school and particularly about what subjects we were learning in the school.

One thing I remember clearly is that we were not allowed to go to the market during the school weekend and we were asked to work with cooks....and after finishing lunch, we had to gather in the dining room to watch documentary films about how much destruction and violence caused by Japanese during the War between China and Japan. We would not get dinner if anyone missed the film. It was a punishment. I think this is how they strategically tried to develop a strong sense of love and patriotism toward China, and hatred towards Japanese people by showing different documentary films.

When I reached India I realized that this is how students were being brainwashed from ground level by the Chinese government. We had more than seven subjects: Chinese, Social Science, Chinese History, mathematics, and Tibetan which is available only for primary students. They didn't teach Tibetan in secondary and higher school. Chinese History was all about the great achievement of their military force during the war with Japan. It's also about Chinese historical places like the Great Wall of China, military, and economic supremacy of China. They would never teach about other countries, other scholars of the world rather than

something related to their own country. I had no idea about my own country Tibet, and I didn't know anything about other countries in the world when I was in Chinese boarding school. I always thought China was my country and Japanese people were my greatest enemy in my life and that was how Chinese teachers had changed or transformed my mindset completely.

Not only that, they would take us to a funeral gathering at a graveyard when Chinese authorities took Tibetan prisoners to kill them, and it happened many times. Local Chinese authorities described Tibetan prisoners as traitors, rebellious groups, and illegal distributors of Chinese confidential documents to the outside world. In the class, teachers would remind us of the same consequences we would face if we do not choose to be a good Chinese citizen.

[...]

My whole family including my two parents, all of them had never been to school and they had no idea what I was learning in school. My father used to ask me about my examination and scoring divisions. In the school during the examination, subject teachers would not let us fail in order to create a better picture of their work for students but gradually I realized that I was not qualified to sit for examinations because questions were really difficult and I could not write the answers in my own words even if I knew the right answer....

In the school, we had a lot of school programs organized by the school cultural and sport committee. It was a big pressure every time they organized this kind of event among students from different places because my family wouldn't be able to come for the event, and I also didn't get new clothes for the event preparation. I would wear new clothes that were not mine as I borrowed them from my school friends....The school teachers and committee members would not allow us to perform on the stage if we didn't wear the clothes they wanted us to wear during the performance....

Sometimes in the class, female teachers would not talk with some of us saying we smelled bad due to the lack of clothes and uniforms to change. We could only get the uniform they gave us and we also couldn't pay if we wanted to have one more uniform.

#### *Part 2 (Interview, 2021)*

I was seven years old when I went to boarding school. I attended from Grade 1 to 6. All subjects were taught in Chinese and Tibetan was taught as a language class. There was one child in my class who was four years old.

My parents were old, they couldn't come [to visit], sometimes my brother used to visit me when he had work in the town.

Students were not allowed to keep phones, only some teachers had phones at that time, but we were not allowed to use them. My family sometimes sent messages through people.

The Chinese students and also Tibetan students whose parents are bureaucrats or officials had special treatment. They had special classes with better facilities, special tutors, and they

didn't have to do any chores in the dormitory or school. But for other students like us they assigned tons of work like vegetable planting, cleaning, gardening, dishes, heavy carrying, etc.

Being away from home was very difficult. My family was not so well off economically. Among roommates, there was a huge difference [economically] so it was very difficult. And the bullying that I faced from the seniors left much fear in me. I knew my parents were old and couldn't come, my brother and sister were busy, so it was hard for them, especially my parents. That also left a huge emotional scar on me.

I think [attending boarding school] affected me as a person. My family often told me that I have become like a Chinese person.

#### **Testimony 4 (Interview, 2021)**

*Attended Boarding School in Lhasa, Ü-Tsang (TAR)*

I went to secondary and senior secondary school from 2003 to 2009 in Lhasa. There were 1,500-2,000 students for the secondary school but our school has both residents and non-residents – around 60% are residents. Five percent were Chinese and 95% Tibetan.

There was limited sanitation and not enough facilities. For the girls' dormitory, there were around 11-12 dormitories, but only one toilet and two bathrooms. They were far from some of the dormitories and it was very difficult to walk at night. We had to turn off the lights at 9:30 and were not allowed to turn them on again. The toilets were open and extremely dirty, far from classes and dormitories. We were often late to class when we had to go to the toilet right before class. My school is considered one of the best schools in Lhasa.

Sometimes, there were cases of bullying by older students. There were many cases of extreme beating by teachers to the point of causing physical injury and humiliation in front of other students.

There was no sex education at all....There was a lack of menstrual hygiene, many girls got serious diseases....It stayed in my mind.

We had two hours for lunch break, so we got around an hour free, other than [that] we didn't have free time. On the weekend, they gave loads of homework. We really didn't have time for ourselves or to engage in any other activities.

It was difficult, and many times I thought of quitting school. In my senior secondary school first year, a girl in my school committed suicide, and the school did not allow any of us to discuss or talk about it. We don't know the exact reason even now. It left a huge fear and sadness in me.

**Testimony 5 (Interview, 2021)**

*Attended Boarding School in Rebkong County, Malho Prefecture, Amdo (Chinese: Tongren County, Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai)*

I was 12 years old when I went to boarding school. I attended [Rebkong Dzong Nationality School] from Grade 7-12, from 1997 to 2003. The school was two hours walking distance from my home. I went home every weekend. But in my school, there were students who were from far off, they couldn't go home on the weekend as they couldn't get there by walking and they didn't have the bus fare. So usually they just stayed back and went home only if there was some emergency. There was no phone facility at that time. We had to buy our own bedding, food, etc. In the common kitchen, they provided soup for lunch.

....In Rebkong, there were separate schools for Chinese and Tibetans. In the Chinese school, there were some Tibetans, mostly officials' children.

We had no free time. The schedule started at 6:00 a.m. with exercise, then self-study, class, lunch break, class, another class, then self-study in the classroom. Teachers gave so much homework, we tried to finish it during lunch break. There was literally no free time to do anything, 6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., every day it was the same.

The living conditions were extremely poor, there was only one toilet far from the dormitory, no light, no bathroom. For morning washing, we had to go and get water from far away. In a room, there were around 30-40 students. There was no hot water, and a coal stove (but they didn't provide enough coals to keep us warm).

Extreme beatings from teachers were commonplace and also bullying from the seniors.

....The initial months were difficult, I wept almost every night missing my home. The general conditions were so poor and beatings were rampant, and we often were hungry. For the first year there were 52 students in my class, and for the second year, only 18 were left. That was very sad. Even thinking about it now, I feel it was such a loss. But conditions were such that they couldn't continue.

Separation from home, heavy pressure from school, extremely poor living conditions. Everyday for three years, I never felt happy starting a day or going to class...During secondary school – three years – my only thought was, "When I get to go back home."

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**United States House of Representatives  
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

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*In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g) of the Rules of the House of Representatives, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form and attach it to your written testimony and it may be made publicly available in electronic format.*

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*Witness Biographies***Gerald Roche, anthropologist, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy, La Trobe University**

Gerald Roche is an anthropologist who is currently a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy at La Trobe University, a La Trobe Asia Fellow, and a co-chair of the Global Coalition for Language Rights. His research contributions have been recognized in several awards, including a La Trobe University Mid-Career Research Award and an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award. His work focuses on issues of power, the state, colonialism, and race in Asia, particularly in the transnational Himalayan region. Much of his research explores how these issues manifest in the language politics of this linguistically diverse area, through state-sponsored language oppression and the social movements and community practices which seek to resist it. He has also researched and written on issues of racism, ethnicity, urbanization, popular music, and community ritual in the region, and how these are shaped by both state power and transnational flows.

**Enghebatu Togochog, Director, Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center**

Enghebatu Togochog is the Director of the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center. In 2001, he established the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC), a New York-based human rights organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of the Mongolian people in Inner Mongolia. Currently he is the Director of the SMHRIC and the chief editor of the organizational newsletter "Southern Mongolia Watch." He has testified before the United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Forum on Minority Issues, United Nations Committee against Torture, and European Parliament. In 2002, he testified before the CECC. His work includes the translation of "Way Out of Southern Mongolia" and "Genocide on the Mongolian Steppe."

**Lhadon Tethong, co-founder and Director, Tibet Action Institute**

Lhadon Tethong is the co-founder and Director of the Tibet Action Institute where she leads a team of technologists and rights advocates in developing open-source technologies, strategies, and training programs for Tibetans and others living under extreme repression. Formerly the Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet International (2002–2009), Lhadon led the high-profile global campaign to condemn China's rule of Tibet in the lead-up to and during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. As China prepared for the Games in 2007, she made international headlines as she posted real-time accounts of her travels through Beijing on her blog—one of the first in the Tibetan world—BeijingWideOpen.org.

**Ayup Abduweli, Uyghur writer and linguist**

Ayup Abduweli is a writer and linguist specializing in Uyghur language education. Born in 1973 near Kashgar in the Uyghur region, he completed his bachelor's studies in Turkic literature at Minzu University in 1997 and earned a master's degree at Xinjiang University in 2001. He was a professor at Northwest Minzu University and Xinjiang Financial and Economic University for nine years. He obtained a master's degree in linguistics in 2011 from the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He was a proponent of linguistic rights and an active promoter of Uyghur language education, returning to Xinjiang in 2011 after graduation. Abduweli opened language schools and kindergartens in the cities of Urumchi and Kashgar. During this time, he was subjected to repeated interrogations and harassment by Chinese authorities. He was arrested in August 2013 and accused of promoting separatist activities. After 15 months in detention, he fled to Turkey from China with his family in August 2015. In Turkey, he collected camp detainees' stories and documented the plight of the Uyghur diaspora, especially of Uyghurs in Turkey. Since 2019, Abduweli has lived in Bergen, Norway, as a writer-in-residence through the ICORN program. In September 2016, Abduweli founded the organization Uyghur Hjelp, advocating and documenting the Uyghur plight with his team and providing aid to Uyghurs in Turkey.